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Fannie C. Fox

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THE LAST SALON

THE LAST SALON:
Anatole France and His Muse

[Le Salon de Mme. Arman de Caillavet]

by JEANNE MAURICE POUQUET

Translated from the French by
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With an Introduction by
MONTGOMERY BELGION

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INTRODUCTION

This is not a book.

By a book one must mean the product, not only of a selection and, as it were, a cooking of the material by the author, but further of a sort of pre-digestion on his part, so that, when the reader comes to address himself to this material, he is able to absorb it practically without effort. The majority of novels, biographies, and autobiographies, satisfy this definition. To read them is almost entirely a passive experience; to obtain from them all that they have to give it is enough to be in a state of receptivity. In short, in a book it is the author, and not the reader, who does the work.

Such, it will be found, is not the case with the present volume: a collection of letters left in the raw and held together only by the thin thread of an occasional explanation. Mme. Pouquet has selected, pruned, and where necessary explained, but otherwise has passed on her material as she found it. She has left the work undone.

Yet if a fragment of life is to be apprehended, if a fragment of chaos is to be reduced to order,

labour by someone there must be. To put it concretely, if the reader is to absorb the material isolated between these covers, he then must be prepared to do the work which, in books deserving of the name, he finds already done for him.

The purpose of this introduction, therefore, is to show that the task is going to be worth while undertaking.

To attain this purpose I shall seek, 1° to indicate that it was Mme. Pouquet's duty to refrain in this instance from exertion, and 2° to give a notion of the detail of the reward in store for the pertinacious reader.

For the indication of 1° it is first necessary to define precisely the nature of the material that follows. This material may be said to bear on two principal subjects:

(a) The last great *salon*, that of Mme. Arman de Caillavet in Paris, and
(b) The influence exercised by Mme. Arman de Caillavet over Anatole France, an influence which, it is generally agreed, was so powerful that it and it alone brought his latent genius to flower.

Upon the widespread interest which two such subjects must arouse, it is of course almost needless to insist.

The word salon has magic in it. All who care in the least for letters, or merely for a stimulating social life, have always been eager to gain, in the words of Cardinal Newman, "a shadow of a perception of the wit and grace ascribed to the conversation of the French salon"; all such people have shared Henry James's yearning to join in salon life. Indeed, ever since the birth of the salon in the seventeenth century, ever since, that is, the days of the Hôtel de Rambouillet, this thoroughly French institution has influenced literature and affected sociability and conversation in manners alike immeasurable. Furthermore, the salon maintained at No. 12 Avenue Hoche by Mme. Arman de Caillavet for nearly thirty years was well worthy of the tradition bequeathed by such women as Mme. Geoffrin and Mme. d'Houdetot, those foster-mothers of Diderot and the other Encyclopædists. She played in the literary life of France during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and the early years of the present one a most important rôle, incidentally a rôle largely unsuspected until the original appearance of this volume.

And as with the subject of the last great salon, so with the other subject, that of the influence which this remarkable woman exercised over probably the most celebrated writer of his period.

Anyone who ever questions anything has felt at one time or another the fascination of the mystery presented by the formation of a man, whether great artist or great statesman, through a woman devoid of exceptional talents, either artistic or statesmanlike, herself. Certainly countless women are often not a little envious of the spell thus cast now and then throughout history by a few favoured members of their sex, and of the sense of power and purpose which the success of such a spell must bring.

Hence the appeal to our curiosity inherent in these two subjects may be taken for granted. But why, then, must we work in order to have our curiosity gratified? Why did not Mme. Pouquet, while she was about it, make a book out of her material and thus spare us the trouble before us? The answer is: Had Mme. Pouquet performed the unavoidable labour herself and produced a book, she would have given to us something far less valuable than what, in fact, she puts within our reach.

Had she wanted, indeed, to weave a story—novel or biography—from the two principal strands of her material, there is no doubt that she could have done so. She had both the requisite talent and the requisite familiarity with the material itself. As to her talent, the very way

in which throughout the following pages she has kept herself ever modestly in the shade and the very skill with which she has avoided making a book are evidence enough. As to her familiarity with her material, her first husband was the dramatist, the late Gaston de Caillavet, Mme. Arman de Caillavet's son; thus she was present almost as frequently as the hostess herself at the receptions and dinners given in the Avenue Hoche, at the house now tenanted by herself; she and her husband were seeing Anatole France constantly, and when he and—to borrow the name bestowed on her by France's own circle—Madame, went travelling, she and her husband sometimes accompanied them. How easy, then, for her to have prepared some kind of easily assimilated dish, replete, to quote Meredith, with those "drolleries, humours, repeated witticisms" which are "like the odours of roast meats, past with the picking of the joint"!

If, in the circumstances, she has forborne doing so, it is, we may be sure, because she was guided, consciously or unconsciously, by a sound instinct. For let the writer once set about producing a real book, and forthwith his material is inevitably distorted. In the process of being imprisoned in his sentences and paragraphs, it ceases to be life as it is lived. As far as the novel, the biog-

raphy, and the autobiography, are concerned, this is, of course, all to the good. Notably these books properly so called heighten our sense of life in general because the writer, precisely through his selecting, cooking, and pre-digesting, makes the particular acquire a universal application. That is one of the great values of such books. But here a universal application is just what we do not want. If we are to acquire an at-all-valuable knowledge of one remarkable woman, of how she maintained her salon and of how she influenced Anatole France, we must have information, not about her resemblances to all womankind, but about her uniqueness, about the truly exceptional in her. It is, in short, the particular and nothing but the particular that we want. And for that we must get at the facts as directly as a scientist does at his bench, as the twelve honest jurymen do in court.

Akin to the evidence at a trial, truly, the contents of this volume may seem at first. But persevere, and presently notice the cumulative effect! The reading of these letters and of the brief explanations accompanying them may well be compared to the reading of those novels of Conrad's in his second manner, the manner of *Lord Jim* and *Chance,* novels in which several witnesses do the telling, and toss and retoss the recital to each

other. A penetrating critic [1] has remarked that this Conrad manner is liable to create "an impression of twinkling which may tire and mislead the reader. Yet about the middle of the book a personal memory is constituted, and the reader has *felt* the characters through a chain of unexpected sensible shocks, as in life." These letters too may at first create an impression of twinkling, but they also will eventually give to their reader the feeling that he is knowing Mme. Arman de Caillavet as if he had known her in life.

So much, then, in justification of the rawness of the dish put before us by Mme. Pouquet. Now for a short analysis of that dish's eupeptic potentialities.

In the beginning the circle which Mme. Arman gathered round her, the little group which she collected out of the Parisian *élite,* included Alexander Dumas the Younger, Jules Lemaître, Pailleron (the author of *Le Monde où l'On s'Ennuie*), and Commander Henri Rivière (the literary sailor who was killed while adding Tonkin to the French colonial empire, his ambition to become a great novelist still unfulfilled). Sully Prudhomme was among its later recruits. And towards the last it consisted of, among others, Marcel Proust, Pierre Loti, the Comtesse de Noailles,

[1] Mr. Ramon Fernandez in his *Messages* (the essay entitled: The Art of Conrad).

Robert de Montesquiou and that other royalist Charles Maurras, Georges Feydeau the writer of farces, and J. A. Coulangheon.

All these important figures Mme. Pouquet resurrects, in short flashes as it were. But not by the repetition of the sallies and witticisms she has heard them perpetrate, for no doubt she has realized with Meredith that "smart remarks have their measured distances, many requiring to be à brûle pourpoint, or within throw of the pistol, to make it hit." Wit in profusion is here, and anecdotes amusing as well as enlightening a-plenty, but both wit and anecdotes are of the more durable kind good enough in the first place to be put into letters addressed to a witty and perspicacious woman. Mme. Pouquet's figures, in short, do not merely reveal their nimble minds; they reveal their selves.

From Marcel Proust's simple and abundant letters hereafter may be learned how he came to know the meaning of love, and "the painful enigma of his invalid soul" will be found solved.[2]

Here, too, Commander Rivière will be found writing from the Far East just before his death: "I must take one more town and write a novel

[2] I am drawing here, as well as in one or two other places, upon the admirable preface in the original French version, a preface from the pen of that eminent historian and former Foreign Minister, M. Gabriel Hanotaux of the French Academy.

before presenting myself as a candidate for the French Academy."

The most touching of these subsidiary figures is perhaps that of young Coulangheon, struck down by disease before he had had time to accomplish anything, yet giving evidence in his letters of such a rich, assured promise. He confessed to adoring Anatole France, and yet he was able to write to France's Egeria, Mme. Arman: "The young men now pressing around M. France and to whom he listens smilingly are all dogmatists. And this is exasperating. They have faith in humanity, as beside Abélard they would have had faith in God." Note, too, how elsewhere he writes: "The socialist faith is even more depressing than the Christian faith." Again, there is this prophecy of his, a prophecy "uttered by an invalid suffocated by a congestion of the ideal": "I do not want to believe in politics. My connections, my studies, my reading, have led me to believe, and very proudly, that all politics are never anything more than a commercial conflict. Are we going to sell rosaries or broadcloth? Gold braid or red caps?" Coulangheon, in fact, reminds one of that Englishman, slightly his senior, Thomas Ernest Hulme, who was blown up near Nieuport during the War, leaving behind him, however, some papers which testify to what the world has

lost through his premature end, papers gathered into the posthumous volume, *Speculations*.

But the flashings from these satellites serve only to throw into brighter relief the woman around whom the satellites revolved, Mme. Arman herself. Inevitably it is she who must arouse our chief interest, and it will be chiefly for what we can learn about her, for the extent to which we can come to know her, that we shall strive to absorb Mme. Pouquet's proffering. How remarkable a woman Mme. Arman was will verily be seen in the ensuing pages. Meanwhile, as a basis whence to start building the portrait, the "personal memory" of her, provided therein for us if we will but exert ourselves, I extract now a few significant sentences out of another portrait, a pen-portrait drawn by her son's friend and collaborator, the Marquis Robert de Flers: [3]

> Mme. Arman de Caillavet had in her so much clarity, so much vigour, so much radiance, that her memory has inherited the splendid virtues of her mind. I see her again as she stood in a splendid and lively mood in the salon of the Avenue Hoche, fixing upon the newcomer a direct and penetrating gaze, as free from indulgence as from unkindness, and, when it happened that she came across it, contemplat-

[3] M. Hanotaux gives this portrait *in extenso*.

ing foolishness sadly, as if it were an infirmity.

La Rochefoucauld used to say: "A witty man would often be very unhappy were it not for the company of fools." This witty woman was unhappy only in their company. They appeared to her as if they had been foreigners whose language she did not know.

Quite on the contrary, dealings with the intelligence filled her with delight, made bloom in her the ever-fresh joy of understanding. She had never understood enough, and insisted upon understanding more thoroughly, more deeply. She preferred to understand rather than to please. No brain could be less superficial than hers. And what a horror she had of preciousness, of affectation! A broad common sense, altogether Latin, almost a man's common sense, was on the alert inside her and preserved her from the danger of being duped as well as from the snares of bad taste. To this she added a finesse full of slyness. This slyness was never for her the occasion for shining, but the means of telling the truth without too much upsetting her victim. She spoke without periphrases, as she wrote without epithets. She would have ravished Flaubert, and Flaubert ravished her. . . .

Literature has nothing to gain by going out into the great world. At Mme. Arman de Caillavet's, literature gained a good deal. It was

> surrounded there not by ceremonial but by consideration. It was not the flattering accessory of a cup of tea, but the bread of the mind. . . .
>
> Hence all the writers who approached this woman full of such rare merit welcomed her influence and solicited her opinion. She knew so well how to confess a book and make it admit its sins! . . .

This is a portrait of Mme. Arman as she was in the limelight. And on that account, of course, it is worth having. But compare it with what may be done with the material which Mme. Pouquet puts within the reach of her readers. She, in a few dry sentences, makes us realize against what handicaps her mother-in-law had to struggle in maintaining her salon: her unhappy marriage, her husband's extravagance, her financial and other difficulties. And then, through some of the letters written by Mme. Arman as well as through letters addressed to her, we see her behind the scenes as often as we see her in the centre of her salon. We not only learn about receptions and dinners; we also share her anxiety for her son; we accompany her when she rushes forth, between a reception and a dinner, to see him in barracks; and we too acknowledge with him, in later years, that if he has cut some figure in the world, it is thanks to the habits of concentration and

work which she inculcated upon him during his adolescence.

M. de Flers's is the portrait finished by its author, with no work left for the reader. Mme. Pouquet, on the contrary, leaves us to do all the portrait-building ourselves. But can there be any doubt that it is she who furnishes the means for achieving the more human and the more poignant picture?

And as with Mme. Arman herself and her salon generally, so with her influence over Anatole France. Here is an exhibition of the highest psychological value. Mme. Pouquet's material makes it clear that had it not been for Mme. Arman, Anatole France would never have fulfilled himself. Not only did she make him work, and he was a lazy man, but also she bestowed on him excellent advice and that authority which average writers often lack the means of acquiring. After reading the following pages, one wonders what Melville, what Poe, might not have done had they had the benefit of a similar influence.

When Anatole France was introduced to Mme. Arman in 1883 he was thirty-nine years old, but he had so far written little. *Le Crime de Silvestre Bonnard* was his only book to have attracted attention, though as to the worth of that book there are eloquent tributes here from Taine and George

Sand. Moreover, in addition to having little to his literary credit, France "was awkward, unaccustomed to society, and his timidity aggravated a natural stutter." Upon his first visit he made only a poor impression. Mme. Arman deemed him somewhat furtive, with "a vague, various, and scattered soul." For a long time she was unable to overcome the distrust with which he inspired her. As Mme. Pouquet comments: "She admired only his talent, to which few people so far had paid attention; often she mocked him, and there are some cruel darts in her correspondence." It was Jules Lemaître who, greatly admiring France, persuaded her to overcome her early aversion. Thus, little by little, the spiritual collaboration was established. And in time this became so close that Mme. Arman helped France in some of his undertakings. Mme. Pouquet quotes a portion of his preface to *La Princesse de Clèves,* that precursor of the novel of sentiment, and puts between inverted commas a page entirely from the hand of Mme. Arman. The latter also wrote several of his articles, as is shown by a significant letter, reproduced hereafter, from Charles Maurras. What she participated in most, however, was the writing of *The Red Lily;* indeed, it was in obedience to her imperious demand that this society novel was undertaken, for she was eager to show

that France, who at the time was invariably labelled as merely a librarian and man of erudition, was as capable as any other writer of his time of producing a tale of adultery in the great world.

Mme. Pouquet supplies all the important details concerning the preparation of this story. She shows the heroine receiving a name and being given a house, the house which is now the Polish Embassy in Paris. With her husband, moreover, she herself accompanied Madame and Anatole France to Florence, where, it had been decided, several scenes of the book should be situated. She shows Mme. Arman during the stay there indefatigably taking notes on innumerable slips of paper, so that France grumbled that the novel would run into ten volumes. Furthermore, she shows how incidents of the journey were later incorporated with the story, and—a piquant touch—she indicates particularly how her own forgetfulness to post a letter one morning inspired that cardinal scene in *The Red Lily* where the hero first feels the pangs of jealousy.

She likewise supplies the letters in which France complains to Madame of how slowly he is getting on with the writing of the novel, although eventually it was finished comparatively quickly.

Besides thus exhibiting the scope and nature of

Mme. Arman's influence, Mme. Pouquet further enables us to obtain a fresh view of France himself, a view of him in the days of his maturity. The many books that have depicted him since his death have all shown him in his old age, "too great to be any longer his true self, and always playing, as it were, a part." Here, instead, he may be seen as he was during those decisive years when his genius bloomed. We are furnished, in particular, with a very human account of how France left his first wife. It is provided by a letter from the novelist Gyp (the Comtesse de Martel). The relations of France and his wife had been embittered by a series of incidents of which this is typical.

Mme. Arman had a Genoese velvet hanging for which she could find room neither in her town nor in her country house. She asked France "to rid her of it." Mme. France did not like the gift and forbade its being used in her house. France, by insisting on disregarding this edict, made her extremely angry. When she saw the curtain-hanger nailing up this already notorious velvet hanging, she ordered him to come down from his ladder. France told the unfortunate workman to stay up and continue his job. The curtain-hanger obeyed him. Thereupon Mme. France left the room, locked them both in, and went off, the

key in her pocket, to dine with Mme. de Martel. The latter, frightened by the story, urged her to hasten back and free the prisoners. When Mme. France reached the Rue Chalgrin (where they lived), she saw a crowd in the street, a crowd brought together by the yells of the curtain-hanger who, from the window, was beseeching the passers-by to come and break down the door. As for France, he was still writing peacefully at his desk, and he did not even raise his head when he heard his wife come in.

Mme. de Martel thus describes the final parting:

> Mme. France told me: "He was writing his article. I scolded him. He answered back. I called him ——" [a word which France says in *Le Mannequin d'Osier* he considered "vulgar, ill-bred, and basely insulting."] "So then he got up from his desk. I thought he was going to leave the room, and so I went away. And then a moment later I heard the street door shut. I thought: He cannot possibly have already had time to dress himself. I ran to the window, and I saw him closing the gate. He was still in his dressing-gown with his skull cap! The tassels of his girdle were dragging in the street behind him and on a tray he carried his ink-pot and the article he had begun. An hour later he sent someone from the Hôtel Carnot with a note for some linen."

The note was to tell Mme. France that he would never return to the Rue Chalgrin.

Here is an Anatole France far different from the latter-day prophet. And that brings me to the melancholy conclusion of this charming and illuminating volume. Although Mme. Arman had done so much for the France of the middle years, the latter-day France grew bitter and irritable towards her. He owed everything to her, at least so far as his material success was concerned. She had even gathered round him his disciples, those who could be inspired by his lessons, by his advice, by his influence. She thus supplied him with "a living wreath of complacence and admiration." [4] But eventually, for her herself, it was all in vain. As Mme. Pouquet remarks, Mme. Arman "had forged" his glory, but that glory, "instead of illuminating their old age and their affection, as would have been right, aroused irritations, quarrels, and painful discussions for the poor woman." And Mme. Pouquet recalls the profound words of Sainte-Beuve: "Glory as a third party in the *tête-à-tête* merely spoils it all. . . . Never love Voltaire, or Jean-Jacques, or Goethe, or Chateaubriand, if by chance you come across such great men."

No doubt, as she aged, Mme. Arman must often have been rather a trial for the great man whom

[4] I am quoting here the distinguished French novelist and critic, M. Edmond Jaloux.

she had made. No doubt then he remembered early slights, real or imaginary, and resented later jealousies, natural but exasperating. But if, in addition to being a consummate prose craftsman, he had also been a human being of lofty character, he would have transcended such pettiness. A human being of lofty character he evidently was not, however. Mme. Pouquet describes an occasion when, because Mme. Arman had criticized a fragment of his *Jeanne d'Arc* which France had been reading to her, he dropped the MS. into the fire. Then, when he had savoured the sight of her misery over his action, he told her that he had another copy, the draft, and also proofs. As the result of such incidents and of others still more cruel, Mme. Arman's end in 1910 was very sad and very lonely. She bade farewell to this world, Mme. Pouquet says, in a state of utter despair.

When we shall have read of that sad and lonely end, we shall be among the final pages of the volume. But it is not with the thought of that end, and its note of bitterness, its implication of the vanity of all endeavour, that we should rise from our reading. That would be to find in Mme. Arman's story nothing beyond a certain morbid significance, whereas if we will but consider, once we have reached the conclusion, not merely that conclusion, but the story as a whole, we may find in it a meaning far transcending

morbidity. Looking back thus and surveying what Mme. Arman's relations with Anatole France achieved for her, we may see that, long before her eventual despair could be suspected, she had known happiness. During the tension of the struggle there must have been a fierce joy in doing, a sweet delight in watching results. In fact, it may be said that in a way she had no justification for the later disappointment, because her exertions had been at the time their own reward. Especially must she have been gratified by the knowledge of their success. And it is that success, too, which should matter most for us. Beside it, indeed, the rest dwindles. What Anatole France wrote, who Mme. Arman was, their eventual estrangement—all that can be forgotten; but that, Mme. Arman having set out to help France, she succeeded in doing so—that should for ever be remembered.

It is with this thought, I feel, that one should take leave of her. She matters, not because she strove and then suffered, but because she strove and was so completely successful. Thanks to the completeness of that success the rest of us, in those dark hours when we are liable to falter, may summon her memory to our rescue. Thus, where she found only despair, we have a source of strength.

MONTGOMERY BELGION

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THE LAST SALON

These fraternal narratives touch us by their air of truth; and though at times praise seems to run through them too abundantly, we are pleased to see it thus scattered by a pious hand, like a domestic offering poured upon a tomb. Such family chronicles should be more numerous. We should take pains to preserve the memory of our intimate dead. It is in this way that periods and places are painted with fidelity. It is through such pages that we penetrate to the heart of human things. . . .

These, I believe, are the two chief reasons why we are so fond of the letters and the little notebooks of great men, and even those of little men when they have loved, believed, or hoped, and have left something of their souls at the end of their pens. . . .

I do not at all hold with those who think that too many intimate and personal works of this kind have been written and published in our time.

—Anatole France, *La Vie littéraire.*

CHAPTER I

(1876 to 1889)

LETTERS TO HER SON GASTON—MME. AUBERNON—COMMANDER RIVIERE—THE YOUNGER DUMAS—ANATOLE FRANCE—JULES LEMAITRE

In 1878 Mme. Albert Arman de Caillavet bought of Arsène Houssaye the town house situated at 12, Avenue de la Reine-Hortense, now known as the Avenue Hoche. Her home very soon became a literary and artistic centre, a realm of the intelligent, carrying on the tradition of the eighteenth-century salons with their atmosphere of *dolce far niente* and their interminable conversations.

Mme. de Caillavet was a woman of wit, energy, and universal erudition, endowed besides with a rare talent for letter-writing. For thirty years she was surrounded by an intellectual galaxy which, comprehending men of note from the younger Dumas to Marcel Proust, would of itself have sufficed to lend to her salon an unparalleled brilliance. But posterity will remember chiefly that her salon was the hothouse in which blossomed

the genius of Anatole France, and that it was here he developed all that was finest in himself. The influence exercised by Mme. de Caillavet over the greatest writer of his time is probably a thing unique in literary history.

Herself marvellously gifted, she might have left behind a rich legacy of her own writing, but her modesty was such that she preferred to devote herself to the fame of him who has been rightly called a pure essence of the French spirit.

The present volume contains a hitherto unpublished collection of letters and documents which will help to attest the importance and the nobility of the part she played, and will at the same time contribute to the literary history of a period which is already fading from memory.

Mme. Arman de Caillavet was married in 1868. The ceremony took place in the chapel of the Tuileries Palace, in the presence of Napoleon III. and the Empress Eugénie.

Her father-in-law was a Bordeaux shipbuilder, a member of the Chamber of Deputies, and a friend of their Majesties. He was a man of great wealth who was later to lose his fortune through an exaggerated confidence in the authority of his august friend.[1] The favouritism shown him, which daz-

[1] The Emperor had encouraged him to begin the construction of seven war-ships before the order had been ratified by the Cabinet. It was never ratified, and the ships were sold to the United States at a loss so considerable that it brought about the shipbuilder's ruin.

zled and blinded him, ceased after his financial ruin had been accomplished. The elder Arman de Caillavet was both charming and vain. The Emperor fascinated him, and in all things concerning his Majesty, M. Arman de Caillavet's judgment deserted him. For example, smoking nauseated him so that he was scarcely able to hide his disgust; yet he commenced to smoke in order not to be obliged to refuse the cigarettes the Emperor offered him whenever they chatted together. He was a fervent admirer of the Empress and a member of the intimate Court circle. His papers contain a number of interesting letters on the period and the Court. In one of them, Mérimée ridicules the French Academy in the following terms: "It is true that we are paid eighty-three francs a month to sleep during sessions, but not to snore; that is expressly forbidden us!" And in another,[2] Mérimée has this to say about the judiciary: "I am writing to you from the Conciergerie Prison, where I shall soon have served my term. I have not been bored at all. Only, I think the whole business stupid, and it offers no proof whatever that the judges know Latin. I hope they are to be taught the language, and I send you thanks for your good wishes."

[2] This letter concerns a celebrated incident in Mérimée's life. He was about to leave prison, where he had been incarcerated because he had instituted a campaign in favor of his friend Libri, a Government Inspector of Libraries, who had been sentenced to serve ten years on the charge of illicit disposal of books and manuscripts.

The flattering social position of the elder Arman de Caillavet, his wit and intelligence, his brilliant connections, had hidden from the girl the serious defects of the young man she was to marry. As a matter of fact, she had agreed to the marriage without much reflection, as any girl might have done whose first inclination had been baulked. Several years earlier she had fallen in love with a rather handsome, stupid, fatuous young man who had not even been aware of her interest in him. Her parents had done everything in their power to divert her thoughts from this unfortunate infatuation, and had found no better cure than to marry her off.

From the beginning she found herself involved in difficulties. She had to struggle against the extravagance and the follies of a husband who was impetuous, chimerical, and a gambler. These struggles were to last throughout her life. As she had a horror of scenes, she was condemned in advance to be vanquished by a man for whom scenes were his best arguments. She had no illusions about him, yet she never ceased to be indulgent, and her indulgence often became a weakness which cost her dear. Shortly after her marriage she was imprudent enough to have annulled the Court order which was intended to guarantee her in a cer-

tain measure against the prodigalities of her husband.

Here is a sketch of him which she drew many years later in a letter to their son:

"My dear Gaston:

"Your father's attitude does not surprise me. He lives surrounded by a halo and sees everything through the rays it throws off. He is both very enviable and very dangerous, for mystics of this kind are apt, like astrologers, to fall into ditches, and even to drag down those who try to restrain them. . . ."

In his *Souvenirs d'un Ecrivain,* M. André Maurel says of Mme. Arman de Caillavet: "She was incomparably valorous in the face of all the miseries of life, its sorrows and its disappointments. She went forward to meet them with unequalled bravery."

As a child she was very proud. She was only five years old when one day, as she was crying, her nurse tried to wipe away her tears. She tore the handkerchief out of her nurse's hands and cried: "Give me back my tears!"

Too proud to complain, she kept everything to herself during those early years in which she was

spared no sorrow. Saddened and meditative, she took pleasure in the company of only a few friends.

Out of the intelligence of some, and the philosophy of others, she drew a wisdom that helped her to endure many trials. M. Maurel says: "She knew how to choose her friends. She was faithful in her affections and rarely took back her friendship once it was given; perhaps because it was very difficult to deceive her."

During these years she read a great deal. Few women have been so highly cultivated. She made no display of her culture, for she thought bluestockings ridiculous and made fun of them; but whatever the subject and with whomever she spoke, when occasion offered she discussed and dissertated upon anything with an eloquence which was the admiration of even those who had expected to trap her into a display of ignorance.

Her memory was prodigious. When some one recited a poem, however long, in her hearing, she was able to repeat it unhesitatingly. "The only coquetry observable in her," writes M. Maurel, "was concerned with her intelligence, and she disdained even that. I mean she drew profit from it only for herself and her intimate pleasure."

She has been reproached with selfishness because she detested to meddle with other people's affairs. This was only an evidence of her prudence and her

love of peace, for no one ever appealed in vain to her kindness. She was sometimes thought malicious because, being shy and irritated by her own shyness, she tried to hide it under a mask of irony and to gain self-confidence by assuming a mocking air. At such times, one forgot the true countenance and saw only the mask. And then, her frankness was terrible, and as she perceived immediately whatever was ludicrous in people or things, she did not always resist the temptation to sharpen her wit on the edge of other wits; but the thought of having caused the slightest pain would cast her into despair, and she would invent ingenious means of reparation.

She made a great many enemies because she could not endure bores. With such people she lacked patience; they were quick to perceive it, and they always sought to avenge the slight. Whenever she saw certain people arrive she would repeat a phrase used by Mme. Aubernon: "Callers who stick closer than the shirt of Nessus." At the age of three years she almost gave tragic expression to her inability to endure bores. She wanted to throw her baby brother, then a few months old, out of a window because he was shrieking. To her horrified and reproachful mother she replied: "He is a nuisance." In order that she might understand how frightful she had been, her doll was thrown out into the

courtyard, and then brought up in pieces. She grew very pale but said simply: "The doll wasn't crying."

Mme. de Caillavet studied painting for a while, but as soon as she recognized how mediocre were the results, she gave it up.

Afterwards came her passionate love of travel, and she commenced to visit cities, churches, museums, and to hunt out picturesque sites. At about the same time she began to collect works of art of all kinds and to frequent the antique shops.

The war of 1871 followed, and then the Commune, the downfall of the Emperor, and the ruin and death of her father-in-law. It was only after she took the house in the Avenue de la Reine-Hortense that she became interested in receiving people and grouping them about her with her fine instinctive sense of the value and pleasure of each caller.

This taste she had acquired in the salon of Mme. Aubernon and her mother, Mme. de Nerville, who reigned over their "bureau of wit" with a despotism which had caused them to be nicknamed "*les précieuses radicales*," a pun, of course, on Molière's *Précieuses ridicules*. She was for a long time the queen of this salon, for Mme. Aubernon had very quickly divined the attraction afforded by the wit, the intelligence, and the mischievousness hidden

under Mme. de Caillavet's reserve. Mme. de Caillavet owed a great deal to Mme. Aubernon: in particular, her taste for those sustained discussions which are possible only at small intimate dinners.

At this period the dinners in the Avenue de la Reine-Hortense brought together the younger Dumas, Commander Rivière of the Navy, Pailleron, Professor Brochard, Arsène Houssaye, Guillaume Guizot,[3] and Gassou, a country neighbor of the Caillavets, a distinguished sportsman and a great hunter who served as model for Anatole France's Le Mesnil in *Le Lys rouge*.

The pleasure which these guests took in meeting at Mme. Arman's was indeed very great. An echo thereof is to be found in the line inscribed by Arsène Houssaye in Mme. de Caillavet's copy of his *Quarante et unième Fauteuil:* "To the most charming and wittiest of women. I need not name her."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet was a staunch republican, and she made a good deal of fun of her husband, who admired everything that had the remotest connection with the nobility. She used, in order to tease him, to pretend a particular preference for everything that was distinctly "middle-

[3] Pailleron: dramatist, best known as author of *Le Monde où l'on s'ennuie;* Brochard: professor of Greek philosophy; Houssaye: essayist and editor; Guizot: professor at the Collège de France, son of the eminent historian and statesman. —*Translator's note.*

class." Two clans developed in her salon: those desirous to please her called her Madame Arman; the others, by way of paying court to her husband, called him Monsieur de Caillavet. Madame Arman would shrug her shoulders and declare that "they were flattering themselves even more than Albert. What silliness, although it is innocent enough!"

But as everything that flatters one's vanity is necessarily powerful, the friends of *Monsieur de Caillavet* won out over those of *Madame Arman.*[4]

M. de Caillavet even extended this evidence of childish vanity to his estate at Capian and to the barrels in which he sold his wine. By way of imitating the great vintages—Château-Lafite, Château-Margaux, and others—he had his stationery engraved with a vignette in which a vine-stock was shown heavily laden with grapes and framing a Château-Caillavet. This device was employed to label his wines.

For several years he busied himself with the collection and classification of papers to prove the antiquity of his family, and he would display with much self-satisfaction documents attesting the fact that the estate at Capian had been in his family since the seventeenth century.

His wife made fun of him and let him have his way, saying: "While he is busy with this nonsense

[4] *Arman* is the family name; *de Caillavet* a place name added later.—*Translator's note.*

he leaves me in peace. We must encourage him in it. . . ." Anything that would take his mind from mad enterprises and extravagance seemed to her excellent.

It was after a dinner at Mme. Arman's that there took place a memorable scene between Mme. Aubernon and Dumas *fils*. Mme. Aubernon had taken it into her head to read aloud to Dumas an essay she had written on *L'Ami des Femmes*. She drew him into the smaller drawing-room, shut the door, and for an hour one heard the outbursts of a piercing voice, answered by dull rumblings. At the end the woman was sobbing and Dumas was thundering furiously: "Madame, you have not the slightest literary gift, and your essay is detestable!" When they emerged, Mme. Aubernon was exceedingly embarrassed and Dumas in very bad humour.

This occurred only a short time after a ball at which Mme. Aubernon, attired as the Glory of Dumas, appeared before her horror-stricken friends with a bust of Dumas on her head and streamers floating about her voluminous person. Upon the streamers were inscribed in letters of gold the names of Dumas' plays and novels. Dumas, who was the most horrified of all, went about saying:

"I must have a very strong stomach to be able to stand such ridicule!"

Mme. Aubernon was always exuberant, but on that night she carried her enthusiasm to the point of absurdity. She was forgiven, nevertheless, and Dumas was the first to pardon her, for she made up for her unseasonable manifestations by many delicate kindnesses. She had illusions of grandeur about her family even when the most vulgar events were in question. One day she declared to a stupefied caller: "My daughter-in-law had a magnificent miscarriage yesterday."

Mme. Arman loved conversation passionately, but she disliked to appear in public. She wrote in 1878: "I have been asked to take part in a play at Mme. de Nerville's, but Dumas is to direct, and the pleasure will be full of thorns." She declined, not thereby offending Dumas, for in a few days he wrote her a charming letter which ended: "I am very happy to have your delightful letter, and I kiss the hand that wrote it. If the other hand is anywhere about, I kiss it also." And he sent her the Actors' Edition of his collected plays.

This witty and popular young woman was a watchful mother. She took charge herself of her son's studies, saw that he did his homework, and

made him recite his lessons to her. He was about nine years old when she put this note on his desk:

"MASTER GASTON:

"I beg you to do your homework and to give up reading the *Figaro* for a while. I shall be home at ten o'clock. I advise you to eat only for the satisfaction of your appetite and not to injure your health by excessive application.

"I have the honour to be. . . ."

She struggled energetically against the boy's native laziness:

"I have not the time to write at length, but I want to ask you to reflect seriously about this: after what we resolved, any weakening on your part would be irreparable. Your education would be ruined, and your future, too, doubtless. Don't let this thought out of your mind. Work as hard as you can; you will be repaid for it in more ways than you know. And whenever you feel laziness or absentmindedness coming over you, re-read this note and arm yourself with energy and decision. It is only the first steps that count, but they must be taken at any cost."

Gaston de Caillavet always carried this letter on his person as a talisman. Here is a less touching

appeal, which shows that the boy already loved the theatre: [5]

"I shall not conceal from you that your letter surprised and annoyed me. I thought you had made up your mind and were ready to wear your ball and chain again on the first of the month, and here you are writing to me about theatres and costumes and fireworks. What is to become of your history and your natural science with all this? All that has gone up in smoke.

"Let me tell you that your father is strongly opposed to this plan and that I think very ill of it. If I have not said so definitively it is because of my well-known easy-going ways.

"I shall write you again to tell you our final decision, but if you do not insist absolutely upon the plan, give it up of your own accord. I appeal, perhaps foolishly, to your conscience."

"My dear Gaston:

"I don't doubt that it is much more agreeable to watch the waves come in than to study botany. But what are we to do? Life is such that nearly always pleasure and duty turn their backs on one another, and it is not always possible to neglect botany in order to sit and admire the waves."

[5] Gaston de Caillavet, in collaboration with Robert de Flers, wrote a great many witty and charming comedies, many of which contained penetrating elements of social satire.—*Translator's Note.*

The subject of the theatre occurs again in this letter:

"I suppose you are in the midst of your performance as I write, and that it was the preparations for this monstrous celebration that prevented you from writing to me these past two days. I count on you to play your part properly, both as actor and pyrotechnist, and I expect you to leave friendly and admiring memories of yourself behind.

"Let me give you some advice for your journey. I insist absolutely that you do not sit in the corner seat and that you do not lean out of the window while the train is running. Don't fall as you step down from the train, don't lose your ticket or your baggage check, and don't do anything ridiculous."

"My dear little son:

"I hope you have had a pleasant journey and that when you got home Victoire gave you one of those good dinners she prepares in her saner moments; that you had a nice time with Pageot; and finally that your return to school will have gone off smoothly, and not as it did last year.

". . . Gassou left on Wednesday afternoon, taking the dog with him in a basket. The cook seems very annoyed at having the dog taken from him. As for the dog, he howled unhappily in his

wicker cage; but Gassou has promised to take pity on the poor unfortunate animal and to treat him with all kindness.

"Good-bye, my darling. Be a good boy and don't tease your grandmother. Keep your feet off the furniture and don't spot the armchairs with ink."

In this note we see that the future author of *Le Sire de Vergy* and *Le Roi* already admired Meilhac and Halévy:

"I hope you have already written me a second letter. If not, I should be pleased to think it was ardour for your homework that prevented it.

"Your father writes that you are getting good marks and that you greatly enjoyed *La Grande-Duchesse* when he took you to see it.

"Good-bye, my darling. I expect and hope that you are a good boy."

Every year Gaston came home to Paris in October while his parents stayed on at Capian in the Gironde. He lived with a tutor and was bored.

"My dear little son:

"I am writing you in the first place to send you the note you asked for. I hope it will bring you

good luck, but the most effective thing will be the pains you take.

"We have had good weather since Sunday. You must not be sad, for a week has already flown by, and that is almost half the time of our separation. Believe me, it is foolish to cause oneself chagrin over an ill when one knows it is not to last long. We must save up our strength for the real sorrows of life.

"Please work, my little one. Think how serious any negligence would be now."

She took his poor marks tragically. He was thirteen when she wrote this:

"UNHAPPY CHILD:

"You may be satisfied with your marks, but I want to tell you that I was so unhappy over them that I was ill all last evening. It was hardly worth while to do the same year's work over again if you come out practically in the same rank as before.

"I despair of you when I see you sitting among the dullards, beaten by younger boys than yourself, and become an object of ridicule. What was Baignère's rank? If you were beaten by him, the shame is irreparable. And what was your mark in French composition, and in Greek? You may imagine how papa triumphed over me and repeated, 'I told you so.' I admit that if I had foreseen this

result I should have made you go into third form. There at least you would have had the excuse of your age; as it is, you are completely routed. I expected you would be promoted into third at the worst. I am so completely discouraged that I don't know what to say to you.

"About changing your class. I think we shall be able to have you re-entered with the help of Guizot.

"Good-bye, my little Gaston. You make me feel very sad."

Guillaume Guizot must have lent himself very willingly to the intervention requested. His eagerness may be judged by the following lines:

"Dear Madame:

"I shall not thank you now for your letter but shall wait until I see you at Bordeaux and at Capian. This is the first time in my life that I am sorry not to be Monte Cristo so that I might have a fairy palace or a mermaid's grotto built in two weeks for your reception. But to be able to call on you at Capian suffices to console me for not being Monte Cristo. The place where letters such as yours are written needs no other adornment or any other charm. I regret merely that I shall have so little time to spend with you.

"Until we meet, then, dear Madame. I kiss your hands most respectfully and am your humble and very affectionate servant . . .

"GUILLAUME GUIZOT."

"You are kindness itself to me, dear Madame, with just the slight touch of reproach that makes your kindness penetrate the more deeply. Injustice becomes you equally with everything else, and constitutes, in you, the more flattering attention. . . .

"G. G."

✠

Toward 1876 Mme. Arman de Caillavet began to preserve the letters she received from her friends, and it is this habit that makes it possible for us to follow her through her life and her friendships.

Commander Rivière was one of her most fervent admirers.[6] They first met at the home of Dumas, where Rivière always dined on Tuesdays. Shortly afterward they commenced to meet daily while he was in Paris. But naval officers are never sta-

[6] Henri Rivière was born in 1827. He was a naval officer who wrote tales and articles which were published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*. Several of his novels enjoyed a good deal of success. Dumas thought his *Pierrot* a masterpiece. He also wrote plays, one of which, *La Parvenue*, was produced at the Comédie Française in 1869. Rivière was sent out to New Caledonia, where he put down a Kanaka uprising. Upon his return he published his *Souvenirs de la Nouvelle-Calédonie*. Later he was stationed in Tongking, in China, where he took the city of Hanoi on April 25, 1882. Abandoned with a handful of men, he was killed in an ambush on May 19, 1883.

tioned in the capital, and their friendship developed mainly through their correspondence.

Rivière was a brilliant conversationalist, paradoxical, occasionally cynical, and ever ready with prompt and biting repartee. "He joked about everything save the army and the navy." When these sacrosanct subjects came into the conversation his voice became vibrant with emotion, and one felt that he was in the grip of a noble passion.

Many people knew Rivière, the man about town, the skeptic, the mocker; others knew Henri Rivière, the talented novelist and dramatist; rarer were those who knew Commander Rivière, the fearless officer, the conscientious student, the hero of Hanoi and of Nam-Dinh.

Mme. Arman de Caillavet knew all three of these men. She knew also a Rivière who was almost a sentimentalist, who "wore his cynicism like a buckler," and whose affection for her, at once touchy and delicate, endured to the end of his life.

He was modest, and never spoke of himself. When he was complimented on his novels or his plays, he would laugh like a schoolboy caught in some slight escapade and say: "One must do something with one's idle hours." He evaded all questions that bore on the subject of his campaigns. M. Victor du Bled has written of him, in *La Société française depuis cent ans:*

"History will speak for him. Unlike most men, who are inferior to their opportunities, he was greatly superior to his. He died young, in the midst of his career."

In one of his letters to Jules Claretie we read this passage: "I tell you positively that it is harder to write a novel than to take a citadel or make history, gun in hand. What do you risk in battle? Only death. At least, no one is there to hiss you."

He had a sturdy soul and an indomitable energy, and there was nothing he feared. He was a handsome man with fine features, very lively black eyes, and a countenance so mobile that it reflected in an instant a whole range of emotions; but when it was necessary, he knew how to hide this mobility under an impenetrable mask. Alas! the sensitive mouth was later to be twisted by torture, the charming eyes were put out, and the handsome head was carried about on the point of a pike by ferocious savages.

The letters of Commander Rivière open the great and interesting correspondence which passed between Mme. Arman de Caillavet and her friends.

ON BOARD THE "VIRE"
IN THE HARBOUR OF TAHITI
March 3, 1876

"I have finally arrived at Tahiti, though that is hardly anything to boast of. I want only to send

you news of myself and tell you how it happens that I am standing on my head while you are on your feet—or the other way around—and am writing to you today at three in the afternoon while you are at this moment abed at two o'clock tomorrow morning. I left Paris on December 30 after having said good-bye to you the day before. I spent the thirty-first alone at Havre. Oh, what a hard day that was! When you are completely isolated and faced with the fact that you are to leave for parts unknown, to be gone two years, then you realize that you are nothing but a poor, feeble human creature, and your lonely heart cries out for all that it loves. They say that to weep does us good, but it is true only after the tears have been shed. The next morning I sailed in the *Labrador*. There were only six passengers. None but those who are forced to would make the crossing in January. For thirteen days we had high western seas, wild western winds, and almost continuous hail and snow. Fourteen little sisters of mercy were travelling in second class, rolling in a heap with seasickness and the movement of the ship. Watching them was my only diversion on board. On January 14 we reached New York, a crude American city of which I need say nothing. I left on the fifteenth, . . . reaching San Francisco after seven days and nights on the

train. I knew that the mail steamer left for Tahiti on the twenty-third at the latest, and as I am at bottom a faithful servant, I did my best to arrive in time. But I should have liked to be held up by the snows in the Rocky Mountains or the Sierra Nevada. The train that left the next day had this luck. The crossing of America, as a matter of fact, was marvellous. After you leave Chicago, you have two days on the prairies, a sea of land without a hillock or a tree; and what is left of the Sioux tribe, instead of attacking the train, as in the melodramas shown at the Porte-Saint-Martin, comes to beg at the various stations on the road. Once in the Rockies or the Sierra Nevada, you seem to be navigating for two days on a motionless ocean, for the snow, spread in all directions as far as the eye can see, lies in the long, quiet folds of an ocean swell.

"I reached San Francisco on the evening of the twenty-second, and I confess that after having changed my clothes and dined I had barely the strength to crawl into bed. The next day was Sunday, which I spent in a fruitless search for the French Consul. I had decided mentally that the ship would leave without me and that I should spend a month in San Francisco, which did not all displease me, when, going out for a stroll about the town, I was received by such squalls that I felt sure

the *Paloma* would never take the sea in so great a wind. And as a matter of fact, she was still in the harbour, so that we left together, she and I, for Tahiti on the twenty-third. As for the twenty-eight days on board the *Paloma*, you would need to have lived them to know what they were like. Ordinarily I have no nerves, but toward the tenth day, and again the twenty-third, I succumbed twice to idiocy or discouragement, as you may choose to characterize my weakness. I recovered my equilibrium by obstinately reading naval books on cyclones, and English novels, and walking to and fro, despite the rolling and the pitching, in a little space ten feet long. Here, too, we were six, and each of us spoke a different language: an old German doctor who jabbered French and drank beer, a young Irishman who split the cook's wood, a Spaniard, the Danish captain, and his wife, who was a Tahiti half-breed. There were also eight Kanakas, a Newfoundland dog, and four pigs (three when we arrived, for we ate the smallest one). The heat was unbearable, and the fleas and cockroaches were innumerable. Oh! that *Paloma!* Hour after hour for twenty-eight days the Irishman chopped his wood and the German doctor said to me, 'You want beer, Monsee?' and, as he uncorked his bottle: 'Push, champain, certainly *très bon!*' Well, I am glad now that I did not miss

the *Paloma* in January, for I should have had to take a sister ship in February, and I should never have had the courage to do it.

"I do not know what is to be done with the *Vire,* whether she is to stay at Tahiti, go to New Caledonia or to Valparaiso. I am ready to do whatever I am told, particularly since anything else is impossible. This sage state of mind proves that I have lost the ardour and curiosity of youth, and have become a philosophical sailor. Nevertheless, my philosophy is still not very great, for it is composed of more energy than indifference.

"H. Riviere."

A year later he is still on the *Vire,* but he has left the delightful Tahiti of *Le Mariage de Loti,* and it is from Sydney that he writes:

"Vire," Sydney
August 27, 1877

". . . I shan't write to you of voyages, for I no longer make any, or of my station, which is monotonous to the point where one would gladly fall in love in order to have something to do—and the remedy would be worse than the ill. We have lately had a change, and I am writing to you from Sydney, which is still the hospitable and agreeable town I once described to you. Rochefort must

have found it infinitely preferable to Numea.[7] If I understood the language, I too should be happy here. I express myself in such pure English that I am constantly complimented, but my ears are like those of a deaf man; for I cannot seize the sounds, and the consequence is that I do not understand a word that is said to me. I take refuge in a smiling and amiable pantomime, which is much too vague. But this is only a temporary cause of annoyance, for we are to return to Numea early in September. What worries me is how to get away from Numea, which will probably not be easy. The Governor thinks the *Vire* is still capable of rendering useful service to the colony for a long time to come. He has told me that she will not return to France until the end of 1878. Consequently, I intend to make an official request to be relieved of my command when my two years expire in February; and, as I shall propose to this stingy government called the Republic to pay my own way home by mail steamer, it is probable that my request will be granted. Even so, I shall not be back in Paris before the month of May. True, instead of five months of boredom at sea in the *Vire,* I shall come back as a tourist, either via San Francisco and New York or via China and India. I should prefer the latter route, for then I shall have seen all the coun-

[7] Henri Rochefort, a journalist, was deported after the Commune to Numea, whence he escaped to Sydney.

tries of the world. This is really pure vanity, for we see these countries better in our imagination than in reality. There are no different countries; there is only a little person who is always the same self, desiring always, wherever it may be, to eat, drink, sleep, make love from time to time, and, when it has the leisure, use its intelligence. When it can do all this it is like Bias, the philosopher: it carries its world about with it. The English, who are very practical, are such people. In Chile, Fiji, Samoa, or wherever they may live, when you go into an Englishman's house you are in England, with its girls, its tea, and its keepsakes. Alcibiades was a better man than this; he adopted the manners of the countries he visited and became the king of fashion everywhere; but he spent himself too rapidly, like our poor friend des Varannes, and died young.

"The truth is that just as I once had the desire to leave, so I now desire to return, having after all done my duty and my task as a sailor in a very platonic and disinterested fashion, for which I shall probably never be compensated. But that doesn't matter to me; I am a Hindu, and a Hindu I shall remain. I have made a hole in my life, which was being frittered away at the dictates of chance, and was moving in a circle. I shall return with renewed strength, resigned henceforth to live tran-

quilly. I shall write devoutly one or two novelettes each year for the *Revue des Deux Mondes;* from time to time I shall be hypnotized by the theatre; I shall go to Puys in September and to Monte Carlo in December. This will go on from my fiftieth to my sixtieth year, then from my sixtieth to my seventieth, and so on, until I make my last voyage from this world into the next, when I shall present myself to the Almighty, saying: 'Lord, here below you have made me neither famous nor rich nor powerful, but I have lived happily. Receive me mercifully and continue to accord me your grace.'

"H. Riviere."

On October 17, 1877, he is still at Numea, hoping to come back to France.

"It will be two years on December 28 since I bade you farewell, and I do not yet know when I shall be back. When one is at Numea, one is here for a long time. Still, we hear that the *France* has been ordered to relieve the *Vire.* She will leave home at the beginning of January, arriving here in May, and then we shall start either around Cape Horn or through the Torres Straits, to be back in August or September. In Paris one has no notion of time. I meet a fellow officer to whom I say:

'It's a long time since I've seen you,' and he replies: 'I've just come back from three years in New Caledonia.' And yet it seemed to me I had parted from him only three weeks earlier. This is what must happen to me in the memory of my friends. They must think of me from time to time as if they had seen me the day before. You all seem to me like knights in a German ballad. You move so swiftly astride your hobby-horses, under the prickings of life, that you have no time to think of those you outdistance, or those who drop out absentmindedly, or are exiled. Here it is the other way around. Our days are very serious and unending, and our years have the fullness and the dignity of provincial matrons out for an airing. Oh, we can inspect them at our leisure and walk along with them step by step. From February 15 of this year to December 9, every day, with the exception of those spent at sea, from one o'clock until four, with uniform placidity, I have written my large page composed of 6,624 letters. I did the same thing during six months of 1876; whereas in Paris I wrote only five out of the sixty chapters of my novel between 1872 and 1875. Now that I have written *Finis* at the bottom of the page, I am a little at a loss for something to do daily between one and four. I read the latest papers, and Zola's *L'Assommoir*. They have their influence upon my manners and

my conversation. I swill a swig of absinthe with one trooper or another before taking my horseback ride to Vata Cove, a delightful little corner of Tahiti tucked away here in New Caledonia. I have only gone to Vata Cove about two hundred times this year, but after all there are fools who go to the Bois de Boulogne every day, and that thought consoles me. Evenings, when I don't stay on shipboard, I have the pleasures afforded by the hierarchy: I play two games of billiards and three of chess with the Admiral. I had to come to New Caledonia to learn to play chess. It is amusing when it becomes absorbing, and it has the advantage—hierarchically—of making conversation superfluous.

"I hardly need tell you again that we continue to take little trips up and down the coast, to Marail-les-Moustiques, Bourail-les-Sauterelles, and Ile-des-Pins-de-la-Commune.[8]

"Yesterday, I returned from Ile des Pins. The political prisoners there no longer hope for an amnesty and are hanging themselves. I think they are wrong. This is not the time for them to be committing suicide, else your Republic, which you probably like, would be altogether heartless and ungrateful.

"I might add that these deported prisoners are

[8] It was on the Ile-des-Pins that the political prisoners of the Commune were confined.

always very polite, and as usual we exchanged many formal greetings. . . .

"I have nothing to tell you of my existence as a sailor, for that goes on exactly as I have already described it to you. However long I delay, I shall surely come back, and if some day, like a traveller sentimentalizing over the past—the past is always charming—I should tell you about the savage islands and New Caledonia, the story would be a better one than this I am writing today.

"H. Riviere."

During the five years which followed these letters, Henri Rivière was frequently in Paris, and remained there over lengthy periods. Then in 1881 he was placed in command of the station at Saigon. In 1882 he was sent on a mission to the young King Chulalongkorn of Siam, at Bangkok, and then to Cambodia.

Hanoi
July 17, 1882

"Madame:

"I have wanted to write to you for a long time. I have even begun two letters: the first was interrupted by a sudden departure for Bangkok; as for the second, I was so ill when I started it that it was never finished.

"One of the hard things about a sailor's life,

something I had not yet encountered, is the treachery of climates. This is especially true of Cochin-China where there is a poison at once subtle and heavy in the air we breathe, in the water we drink, in the damp heaviness of the air, in the sudden chill of the night. Bit by bit we are stripped of our strength, our health, and our intelligence. If circumstances took me back to Saigon, I think I should ask to be transferred home to France. In Tongking, where I have been for four months, it is different; the climate here is salubrious, and I do not feel an invisible enemy everywhere about me. All the same, we are going through a period of intolerable heat. We live in the shade of enormous fans that send great puffs of air into our faces day and night. The Annamites who serve as fan-boys wave with mathematical and indefatigable regularity. No one can work in this heat; we live dreamily and lazily, and I confess that I like it. You know, I do not believe in mental ills; they come from a bad digestion, or an overstimulated nervous system. As concerns the latter, we are perfectly happy here. Our nerves are beautifully tranquil. We have none of the cares, the demands, the factitious passions of civilized life. While we muse, our memories return, and as we caress the chimeras we might have pursued so pleasantly, we separate them from the realities and the annoyances they might involve.

We feel ourselves loosed from the ties we have made, and need no longer struggle violently in our chains to think ourselves free. Everything is smoothed out by indulgence and forgetfulness. Cherished habits, beloved faces, affectionate friendships, the various ambitions that once called to us —all this floats in a gentle breeze. 'This was our life,' we say to ourselves; 'or at least this is what it might have been; it was agreeable and charming, but it was very trying, too.' We exist only within ourselves, not without others but far from them; and so far from them that we feel they all have friendly smiles for us, and feel for us that same little blend of indulgence and half-oblivion that we feel, without malice, for them. These distant lands, the absence of women and the presence of sun, make up the self-centered day-dream of the Epicurean I fancy myself to be, or the Hindu, as Dumas would say, that I am.

"And yet I am concerned with naval matters, politics, and war—although they are very easily dealt with when I am not spending the best part of my time writing novels and tales. My professional duties do not upset me; rather do they amuse me a little. Thus, I had recently to take the citadel of Hanoi, which its disagreeable government had insisted upon fortifying in our very faces. I am not yet sure that my action will be approved, but

I do not care about that; I have done what seemed to me my duty, and I consider that a tranquil conscience is one of the elements of happiness. This sounds very moral, but it is merely sensible, because straight roads are easier to travel than by-paths, which are always blocked by brambles and other obstacles. In a word, my life at Hanoi may be summed up as follows: I am fanned, I dream, I ride horseback at six or seven in the evening—the only hour when the sun permits riding—and at night I play roulette. This instrument of perdition, reduced to the safe proportions of a family game, is our only amusement. For me, it has the advantage of gathering our officers about me. Seeing them oftener, I learn to know them better, for they would never come for the sole pleasure of my company, and if they came for that alone they would bore me.

"Forgive me for this letter in which I speak only of myself. This is the kind of news a sailor writes home, and his only excuse for it is that he writes seldom. Do not think me as selfish as I should like to be; my thoughts are often with you, with my friends, Dumas, Mme. Aubernon, in the Avenue Hoche at your charming and hospitable house that must now be filled with beauty. I am at this moment as far from the Red River flowing by under my windows as I was from Paris an hour ago. Please remember me kindly to your husband and

all your family, and allow me to send to you, from my distant exile, my warmest and most respectful greetings.

"If you were good enough to care to send me news of yourself, you would need only address me on board the *Tilsitt* at Saigon, Cochin-China. It is from there they forward all our letters.

"H. Riviere."

How simply he speaks of having taken Hanoi, slipping in the news between two descriptions of his life in Tongking! He wrote jokingly to Dumas: "I have taken Hanoi and dysentery, and I hardly know which of the two will seem more important to the Navy Department."

While he was in Tongking, Rivière learned through a letter from Dumas that Mme. Arman had been injured in a dangerous carriage accident on her way home from the races at Auteuil. She was in a victoria with her son and Mme. de Gévrie and was very seriously injured; her son came off with a few bruises, while poor Mme. de Gévrie died a few months afterward as a result of this accident. Rivière was greatly upset and wrote:

Hanoi
August 14, 1882

"Madame:

"I had scarcely sent off my last letter when I learned of the terrible accident in which you were

involved. Fortunately, great distances have this advantage, that by the time you have fresh news it is no longer the same, and that while you are feeling distress, your consolation is already on its way. I learned also that, except for your immediate pain, the accident would not be followed by disastrous consequences. I do not need to tell you how glad I am for you and your son and for Mme. de Gévrie. When this letter reaches you, you will doubtless be attending the wine harvest, and will have only a memory of the accident and a certain fear of horses. Although Buffon calls the horse man's most glorious conquest, horses are nevertheless brutes and the worst of brutes. In Tongking they are vicious and dangerous. My aide-de-camp has just had his arm broken. His horse grew frightened and went mad at the sight of an elephant. Another officer was cruelly bitten by a horse. I tame my own mount in rather cowardly fashion by feeding him with bits of sugar, which does not prevent him from jumping like a sheep and prancing about as soon as he hears the slightest noise that he deems unpleasant.

"I hope that you are pleased at my recital of the ill deeds of these beasts. It has been proved, as a matter of fact, that M. de Buffon never was astride a horse. I wish now only to tell you how grieved I was to learn of your accident, and how

happy I am to know that it was only an accident and not a grave misfortune.

"Allow me to express my most respectful sympathy.

"H. Riviere."

After the accident, young Gaston was sent away to the country for several days in order that he might recover from the shock. His mother wrote him of her progress:

"My darling child:

"I am doing a little better today, but I am still full of pain. Poor Mme. de Gévrie has made much less progress than I have. Many people continue to come to see me. Since Sunday Naquet, Saint-Marin, Dumas, and Guizot have called on me. These are only the interesting ones.

"Your letter was filled with details. There were perhaps too many descriptions; they should be alternated with a few impressions so as to vary the tone.

"Another reproach: you overdo your t's: you add one to *fond,* and another to *faisan.* This is atheistic spelling. Nevertheless, you are a sweet child to write me at such length.

"Good-bye, my little boy. Behave well; take good care of your person, your manners, and your language, and read a little history so that you will not become encrusted in laziness."

Meanwhile, the sailor and conqueror continued his rough existence. But, far away though he was, Paris kept him in mind. Dumas, who was very fond of him, would not let him be forgotten. He praised his books, read aloud the letters he received, and started a movement to elect Rivière to the French Academy. Mme. Arman seconded him and kept Rivière informed of what they were about. He answered her as follows:

HANOI
February 2, 1883

"MADAME:

"Thank you for your kind letter of October 16. However selfishly a person may imagine himself to be living in distant exile, he still continues to live on the past, although occasionally it seems to him he has forgotten it. The pretty drawing-room, the dining-room, and the tapestries in the Avenue de la Reine-Hortense suddenly came back to me. I do not need to speak of the mistress of the house. It was she above all, gracious, charming, and benevolent, who filled my vision, and here in sight of my Red River, overlooking the cacti, the rosebushes, and the palm trees of my garden, I sat dreaming with a little feeling of melancholy, of regret, and of desire. There are dreams that pass in life, and, better than dreams, realities, whose hour has not struck and will never strike. I shall not say: 'What

does it matter?' for that would be to pretend a false detachment from the best things here below, and would not be true; but it is true that these half-perceived dreams, however unrealized and unrealizable they are, have a very soothing, friendly, and generous influence on the course of our life. They are our friends, and we live with them at once familiarly and respectfully. We are sure they will never know this, at most they will only surmise it, and perhaps they will not be offended thereby. My principal concern here is not, as one might suppose, with the Chinese and the Annamites. I think of them from time to time, when I have to, and that is all. These serious things are so easy! My long days, which are really very brief, are filled with imagination and laziness. I have independence in solitude; and only this—if you add authority, because they love it—explains the missionaries to me. They are better here than in New Caledonia. What sustains them is less faith, I think, than a sort of soothing stultification and an expectation of certain imperishable rewards of which they have not a very clear idea. I don't know quite how it has come about, but since I left France I have been reading religious philosophy. During the long, slow sea-voyage from France to Cochin-China, I read and made notes in our friend Caro's *The Idea of God*. It is a great and good book, very honest

and very wholesome. People say that sea-voyages serve no purpose, but if I hadn't had those forty days at sea I should never have read this book. Now I am reading Renan's *Souvenirs d'Enfance et de Jeunesse*. . . . At bottom, all these philosophers, including Taine, who deifies 'the atom in its development and its sovereign serenity,' go to a great deal of unnecessary trouble. For myself, if I have to have a god, I prefer that he be God. The truth is that we find in all the religions and among all the peoples of the earth the very consoling and helpful idea of a being called God—infinitely merciful, mighty, and just, capable it may be, of concerning Himself with each of us individually. I say 'it may be' because in reality He cannot so concern Himself; He would be obliged at every moment to alter the immutable laws in which He Himself is chained. However loudly I, a sailor, pray to Him, He cannot move the rock that I fear because it lies in the path of my ship. But my prayer, which is my confidence in Him, lends me sufficient strength of soul and clarity of mind to evade the rock. Moreover, whatever all the philosophers may argue, it is good to believe in some one, even in God; but as God is very far away and very high above us, it is still better and more practical to believe in a man or a woman, in friendship or in love. I write this last word mistrustfully. Love! Is it really love,

as we foolishly conceive it, that we should believe in? Isn't it really something much less feverish and exaggerated? Is it not a tender affection, smiling and intelligent and believing in pleasure, which has wings, rather than in happiness, which has none? Happiness is a rock to be moved; it falls dumbly back upon us like the rock of Sisyphus. And I am not responsible for the line of verse which goes: 'The road is so smooth from pleasure to happiness.' You see that I come back to my subject, which is yours, too, perhaps, and I say that life does not seem to yield all that one expects of it. My subject is like a flock of beribboned sheep roaming without their shepherdess. I am neither so Turkish nor so Asiatic as you make me out, and my opinion about women is not what you attribute to me. Only, I think they lack both the courage and the perseverance to be as happy as they might be.

"I really ought to be the one to say that these pages I have been writing are mere verbiage; yet they interest me more than the death of Gambetta —assuming he has died; for here, on February 2, we have as yet had no definite news of his end. Therefore I feel a great and selfish pleasure in chatting with you, and I keep our friends in reserve, for my last page, in order to be rid of them briefly. Do not tell them this. The newspapers, which

penetrate everywhere and even to Tongking, have kept me informed of Dumas' various troubles. But I am not very fond of Mme. L——.

". . . I have had two friendly letters from Dumas, and my New Year's gift to him was an Annamite travelling-basket. The gift is original, but somewhat embarrassing in France. I knew that Pailleron was to be elected to the Academy, I know now that he is in, and I am very glad of it. That is another dream, the Academy, and yet perhaps all roads lead to it as they do to Rome. I recall that you spoke to me of it with a benevolence so great that for the moment it seemed to me I deserved it. I do not know yet when I shall return. I have been strongly advised not to spend the summer here, but I continue to hesitate. I shall soon have to make up my mind, for in three months the terrible heat will be here again.

"Please do not be offended at the length of this letter, and believe that it is only due to my desire to spend a little while with you. From beginning to end, it is an expression of my very respectful devotion."

Rivière stayed on because he felt his conquests threatened and the forces left for their defence insufficient. He was able to resist the power-

ful attraction of friends and the repose he might enjoy in France.

The beginning of his next letter is melancholy in tone. It seems to us tragic, for we know that eleven days after it was begun, its author was killed.

HANOI
May 8, 1883

"MADAME:

"The letter you were kind enough to write on December 22 crossed mine of February 20, and I am answering it on May 8. These mere dates speak eloquently of the distance that separates us, and of the swift passage of the time we lose. You landlubbers know very little of the meaning of remoteness, a thing of rather sad bitterness which we manage somehow to endure. Its burden is lightened by that which is least annoying, best, perhaps, or at any rate most consoling in human affections —I mean sympathy of thought. We forget that our friends were able to make us suffer. We remember only their goodness and their charm, in proportion to our distance from them. And how our chimeras, our hopes, and our dreams of affection blossom far from reality, in the pure air of imagination and emotion! There exist solitary pleasures in which two persons always figure: oneself, of course, and a smiling, obliging, beloved

phantom. This is the shameless fashion in which I live, for my age is one of sense, selfishness, reverie, and laziness. 'Laziness' is an exaggeration, perhaps, for I have been very busy these past two months, but as I have been busy with serious affairs, it doesn't matter. Our Government, which can never make up its mind about anything, annoys me. It had the carelessness to send me five hundred men, and I undertook to do something myself which it could not make up its mind to instruct me to do. I have taken possession of a whole mining region that the Government coveted but hesitated to take, and I have also captured a second citadel. Their Tongking question will now be forced to a solution. The capture of Nam-Dinh was a little more difficult than that of Hanoi. For a whole year they had been fortifying the citadel with cannon and soldiers. Five of our men have been wounded and Lieutenant Colonel Carreau had his right foot shattered by grapeshot while he was placing a cannon in position. I have just written this to Dumas, who will probably have told you of it, as of the now legendary luncheon at the Royal Pagoda, where we partook of cold chicken, Bordeaux, and coffee.

"What an exhilarating moment of enthusiasm and impetuousness when the gate was smashed by cannon shot and we burst in, the bugle sounding

the charge! I came rushing away from Nam-Dinh to Hanoi, which had been attacked during my absence, but the attack had been vigorously repulsed. Since then we have been in the midst of a fair number of enemies, and I have become administrator, customs guard, judge, policeman, all sorts of things which have nothing to do with sailing a ship or writing a novel. Toward the end of last year, when the cool season began, I was able to write a long novelette, in two parts, called *Edith*. The manuscript is here in an inlaid Tongkingese chest; following this novelette I had begun a novel planned long ago, and entitled *Perversité*. But it is written that I shall never finish it. I had composed three pages, not a single page more, when the events I have recounted took place; they are still going on, and aside from the fact that they leave me very little time of my own, the unbearable heat has come back. I don't know yet whether the people in France will approve my action. I have done what I had to do; besides, I have a philosophy of tranquillity which expects anything to happen and is resigned to events in advance. As I re-read your letter in writing to you, I wonder if this very Epicurean philosophy is not something I got from the eighteenth century, which I love as you do, and in which you have taken refuge, you tell me, from the boredom of your own

time. People were very witty in those days, if I may take 'witty' to express the intelligent appreciation of the pleasures of this world and of the affairs of the heart. An expression of the period, you see. Today we fight over happiness, women fighting hardest of all, and nobody knows very well why. The truth is, women no longer believe in the passions of romanticism, and they dislike, with sufficient reason, those of naturalism. For myself, I am not bored by my time, first because I am a man, and secondly because it seems to me that, despite its shortcomings, there are great things to be accomplished in it. Whenever I discover to my astonishment that I have ambitions, I grow a little melancholy. I should like to be ten years younger in order to try these great things, but I am not. I have reached, very prosaically, the last active years of an existence which has been easy and kind to me —in a word, happy. I have nothing to complain about, for it is given to very few to raise themselves up to the stars, even to those of an admiral.

"I have left myself very little space to thank you for your very kind letter, but you will readily have seen that my own is at once an expression of my gratitude and of a sincere and respectful affection.

"H. Riviere."

Once again he announces with simplicity that he has taken a citadel. And he writes that prophetic sentence: "Their Tongking question will now be forced to a solution." Death lay there in ambush; he knew it, but careless of it, or careful to dazzle her to whom he wrote, he added this postscript eight days before the terrible end: "Dumas wants me to become a candidate for a seat in the Academy. Don't you think this is premature? His indulgence toward me blinds him. I think it would be prudent to publish another book first, and take another city. What do you think?"

He had this daring *prudence* and was massacred. Le Myre de Villers, the governor of Cochin-China, who did not like him, maintained that he died "because he disobeyed formal instructions" and wanted "to draw attention to himself by a brilliant exploit so that he might obtain an admiral's epaulettes and a seat in the Academy." However this may be, "his disobedience," as Gabriel Hanotaux has said, "is the basis of our Indo-Chinese Empire."

Commander Rivière's death was a sad event for his little group of friends. Nevertheless, they continued to see each other as before. The dinners in the Avenue Hoche now rivalled in brilliance those of Mme. Aubernon, in the Rue d'Astorg.

From the charming letters of Dumas to Mme. Arman de Caillavet we extract these lines:

"And it was a real feast to me to spend a few hours with you and be able to know M. Naquet better. I should have been happy to congratulate him upon his great success of these last few days, but he will explain to you himself, in his professional capacity, why I was unable to accept your most kind invitation. For two days I have had a sharp inflammation of the eyeball which is in a way to infect the other eye. Light and air are absolutely forbidden me. I did not let you know immediately yesterday, because I hoped to be better; in that I have been disappointed, despite the drops of atropine. I might, as a last resort, have come blindfolded, but that would have prevented my seeing you, and besides, only love has the right to take such liberties. . . ."

In this same year of 1883, Anatole France was presented to Mme. Arman de Caillavet. The impression he made was mediocre. He was awkward and lacking in social experience, and his timidity aggravated a natural tendency to stammering. This "vague, varied, vagrant soul" seemed to Madame Arman a shifty nature.

She, who was brutally frank, could not endure

his sweetish manners, his excessive compliments delivered with such politeness that she saw in them obsequiousness. In the beginning she treated him without kindness, and even rudely. And yet, as M. Jacques Roujon says: [9] "Like Jérôme Coignard, what he least possessed was a sense of reverence; nature had denied him this sense, and he did nothing to acquire it. It may even be that self-respect was as lacking in him as respect for others."

Despite this, France could say with Coignard, in any gathering however intimate: "You see me all of a sudden uncertain, embarrassed, stammering, and stupid."

This is what M. Emile Hovelaque says of his first encounter with France:

"What did I see on this day of days at the table where I was to see it so often thereafter? A long, heavy horse-face that seemed to be twisted by a slightly stiff neck, the lower jaw crooked under an untrimmed goatee, the hair stiff and brush-like, a thick nose, a grey, coarse-grained skin. Only the eyes were remarkable; their dark brilliance, their magnificent vitality and intelligence lighted up this disquieting face in which there was something of the seminary priest, the Bonapartist, and the faun. He spoke, and he spoke badly. His voice

[9] In La Vie et le caractère d'Anatole France.

was grave and rather unctuous, hesitating at moments, and nasal; he seemed tongue-tied; sometimes his idea became lost in vague digressions; the anecdote hung in the air as if cut short by timidity. At this period, France's conversation was full of 'revisions,' was 'retouched,' and was not what it later became. This first encounter disappointed me. . . . Strange as it may seem, the first flow of France's thoughts was always turgid." [10]

These impressions were probably the same as those of the friend who was later to bring them together so frequently. In an article on Renan, France wrote: "The gift of feeling vividly all sorts of impressions lends inconsistency and a kind of perfidy to the tenderest and most sensitive natures. It is profoundly true that the most delicate friendships are not always the most dependable."

Is this what she thought, she who was to become his most devoted friend, his intelligent counsellor, his skilful guide, his powerful support, she who was to lead him to fame? It was a long time before she was able to overcome the distrust inspired by France's character, but in the end she was disarmed by his marvellous intelligence. Her own was too far above paltry vanities to be halted by the petty

[10] *Quelques Souvenirs sur Anatole France* (in the *Revue de France*, April 1, 1925).

misfortunes precipitated by France's awkwardness and entire lack of social training.[11]

For years, even for many years, no one could see that she felt any friendship for him. She admired only his talent, which interested few people at the time. She derided him frequently, and her letters contain many cutting references to him.

On the other hand, Jules Lemaître, who was presented to her at about the same time, pleased her immediately, perhaps because of his manner, which was much easier than France's. Yet he was timid, too, but his timidity was more graceful. His words came easily, and his ideas were clear. While Mme. Arman was planting barbs in France, she was, from the beginning, on friendly terms with Lemaître:

"MADAME:

"I am sending you a little volume containing my thesis for a doctorate. It was written too hast-

[11] Letter from the Comtesse de Martel (the well-known novelist, "Gyp") to Mme. Gaston de Caillavet: "I am in a position to testify to the great service rendered by Mme. Arman de Caillavet to France. I met him in 1882. He was entirely unknown to all save a few men of letters, and I believe he would have remained so without the aid of your mother-in-law. His awkwardness, his timidity, and his entire ignorance of social usage marked him as a man to remain apart, whatever might be his talent. It was Mme. Arman de Caillavet who educated him from the ground up. We observed with amazement his relatively rapid change, without at first suspecting whence it came. Your mother-in-law did for France exactly what Mme. de Loynes did for Jules Lemaître. I don't believe that France's wide fame is due to his great talent. Most people—even the cultivated—who have bowed before his talent would never have discerned it except for Mme. de Caillavet. And without her he would never have got into the Academy."

ily, but its subject is a period you love and to which you rather belong. You will receive also a 'story of a martyr' which pretends to be very philosophical. I really do not know why I am sending you these trifles. It must be simply because to do so gives me pleasure, for I am made very happy by the idea that you may read my work. This is equivalent to saying that I am very fond of you. I hasten to correct whatever may be unseemly in this declaration by assuring you of all the respect that decency may demand.

"JULES LEMAITRE."

Lemaître's letter was addressed to her at Royat, where she was staying with her father. This is how she depicts her first impressions of the little town:

"We got in last night about six o'clock, after a tiring and dusty journey. We are abominably ill housed in two tiny closets looking out on the street, with partitions so thin that neighbours, passers-by, and vehicles seem to be in our very rooms. We have been promised other quarters immediately, for we should never be able to stay on where we are. It is possible that I may not stay for the end of my cure. The doctor has prescribed a very complicated treatment, and I do not feel myself strong enough, and certainly not ill enough, to follow it.

"I am glad to be able to say that the horrors of the *table d'hôte* are spared me. We dine at a restaurant which opens out on a garden and is very agreeably situated. As for the food, I had rather not speak of it, else I shall revive painful memories.

"The countryside is very pretty here. Royat is a little agglomeration of houses so closely squeezed together that they seem to lean against one another in order not to tumble down the side of the mountain. Except on one side, these very high houses completely hide the view. . . ."

She wrote on this same day to her son about his chances in the Interscholastic Competition:

"I am very anxious about you. Since you have not written, I can only form the most melancholy conjectures about the reason for your silence. My one hope is that Brochard was right about the day when the results will be made known. However, no matter what happens, do not be too downcast, darling; you have worked very hard, you have done everything you could, and you still have, aside from my esteem—which apparently is not compensation enough for you—the hope of catching up later. You can do this, particularly in French, for which you have a very real gift which another year in school will develop into a genuine aptitude."

The next day she received the news for which she had been waiting so impatiently. The result was not so satisfactory as she had hoped:

"Your wire brought me a little disappointment, but that was probably because we aimed too high, and also because Brochard had been very thoughtless in his assertion.

"But we must console ourselves, for real merit shows in French composition, and to have got a second honorable mention is still something to be proud of. It is now only two steps upward to the honor prize next year. In history composition, of course, the least omission serves to disqualify you; nevertheless I am surprised that you got no mention.

"Still, your self-esteem is safe, and you may appear at Puys without shame. M. Dumas will particularly appreciate the notice given your style.

"Grandfather took my arrival very courageously. He had not yet had time to benefit from his solitude."

Whenever they were separated, she wrote to her son almost every day. He was her great concern, the object of her deepest affection.

Meanwhile, she must have thanked Lemaître for his little books, for he writes to her:

"MADAME:

"Surely you compliment me too highly, but I am not vexed with you, because the compliments are very pretty, very well calculated, going straight to the spot at which they were aimed. Meanwhile, I owe you mine on the success of your son. I know that he is capable of doing still better, but life is made of haps and mishaps, and what he has accomplished is very decent. Besides, this austere young man has not spoken his last word, and I predict that he will cover you with glory next year."

"The last dinner at Mme. Aubernon's was very amusing. It would have been even more so if you had been there. Mme. Potocka said to me: 'Do you miss Mme. Arman?' I replied very simply: 'Oh, yes!' And we lamented, France and I, over your absence. . . .

"Please believe me, Madame, respectfully yours,

"JULES LEMAITRE."

Her correspondence with her son tells something of her life at Royat.

"MY DEAR GASTON:

"I am very delighted to see that you are still enthusiastic over your stay at Puys. Be careful when you go bathing, and also when you go fish-

ing. Since I have no spare son, I insist upon preserving you.

"I am not sure that you would like it here; living with Grandfather necessarily means very little movement. My mornings are filled by my treatment. After luncheon we meet and wonder whether we shall take a drive. More often than not we stay in. And then we move aimlessly about the house, sit first in one chair, then in another, and finally risk listening to the music at the Casino.

"Evenings, on the other hand, Grandfather is full of spirit; he likes nocturnal pleasures. I have great difficulty in restraining him from flying to the theatre, which tires me because of the stifling heat. Worn out by my treatment, I should prefer to go to bed early, but young people must be entertained. . . .

"P.S. The long vacation will probably bring your tutor Collet here. He must be flying on the wings of cupids and zephyrs."

"My dear Gaston:

"Collet has had an excellent luncheon. He was given trout, fried eggs, chicken with tomato sauce, chops and potatoes, a vegetable salad, an appropriate dessert, black coffee, and chartreuse. He seemed satisfied. He said to me gallantly that he

wished the mothers of his pupils might be allowed to hear his lectures, on condition that he might invite those of his choice, however. He said he was not at all displeased to be deprived for a while of the too-absorbing affection of his family. Besides, Mme. Collet's pleasure will be so much greater when she sees him again.

"I had a letter from Lemaître the other day, congratulating me on your honorable mention. 'I know that he is capable of doing still better,' he wrote; 'but he has the future before him.'

"Try to do some reading. A few books of a classical nature, written in a slightly polished style, will do you good. Ask your father to answer the questions I have put to him. What happened between Mme. Dumas and him at luncheon? . . .

"I am forgetting to tell you that Collet says he will not take Vernudacchi again next year: he thinks you alone suffice to distract his study-class."

"My dear Gaston:

"What you tell me of the *exquisity* of the chef at Puys makes me slightly nervous. I beg you to moderate your transports; otherwise you will come back to me bloated out of all recognition.

"M. Dumas' friendship for you is very flattering. Try to keep his favour.

"I think as you do that Victor Hugo's phrase is

pretty; still, the word *happiness* seems to me extravagant. I should prefer *charm*.

"Here I am at my ninth bath. It will take me until a week from Wednesday to take twenty-one, and that seems a long time. What will we do afterwards? Your grandfather will amuse himself as he pleases, I presume. And I shall let him follow his bent."

"Master Gaston:

"Your letter was respectably written. The absence of blots lent it, doubtless, a certain monotony, but I can endure that without pain. As for the style, that was neither good nor bad, although I must say Grandfather thought well of it and thinks me rather hard on you. I should like a little more colour. We have plenty of time in later years to simplify our expression and strip it of ornamentation. Rhetoric is well suited to youth.

"Try to read a little Chateaubriand, if you come upon his work. I suppose, though, that just now books mean very little to you, and that you prefer running through the woods to running through any pages, even the most eloquent."

The idea of work, necessary and indispensable work, runs through every letter. Mme. Arman endeavoured to impart this obsession to all the

writers whose minds interested her. Although she might scold Gaston when he slid into lazy habits, or spent himself in pleasures, she encouraged him whenever she felt he was making an effort, and she consoled him when his effort was not crowned with success. From the letters of these years I glean at hazard, here and there, the following passages:

"Why didn't you succeed in the Competition? It cannot have been because of what you told me, since the other two succeeded. There was no injustice shown; there was merely your weakness. My child, you are never willing to acknowledge yourself wrong; even at this late date, you are still trying to persuade me that it was for reasons foreign to the matter. . . .

"I was irritated to see that your letters were filled with details about fishing, with not a word concerning the result of your studies. Think this over. You are much too light-hearted about serious things. . . .

"I write to you about German and Latin, and you reply about rabbits and hares. . . .

"Your education is your future, my child. Nowadays it is as dishonourable to be ignorant as to be dishonest. In both cases one becomes a social outcast. . . .

"It would be very sad if you became a proof of the error of my system of education based on independence. If you have the slightest sense of honour, you will wish me to triumph in this. . . .

"Effort, far from rendering work more annoying, makes it attractive. The time spent is the same, but the desired result is obtained, and boredom is avoided when you apply yourself seriously. . . .

"Do not be disheartened by your relative failure. I think it was as undeserved as it was unexpected. I sympathize with you with all my heart, and I share your unhappiness . . . but that can scarcely make the situation better. . . ."

In an article on Anatole France, published in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* of November 1, 1924, M. André Beaunier says: "Lemaître was one of the little group of writers who discovered Anatole France." It was he who presented France to Mme. de Loynes. This lady endeavoured to attach France to her salon, but Mme. Arman de Caillavet, who never went to Mme. de Loynes', persisted firmly in her opposition. In the end, she detached France from this circle long before Mme. de Loynes succeeded in luring Lemaître away from Mme. Ar-

man, thanks to a false move by the latter, and most of all to the Dreyfus affair.

Later, people who wanted to tease Mme. Arman used to remind her that she was the indirect cause of the tie between Mme. de Loynes and Lemaître, for it was she who persuaded Arsène Houssaye to invite him to a masked ball, and urged Lemaître to accept; and it was there that Mme. de Loynes, disguised in a mauve domino adorned with violets, aroused Lemaître's interest and won him.

But in 1885 Lemaître did not yet know Mme. de Loynes. He was in the first flush of his friendship for Mme. Arman and for France. He admired France and said of him: "He is an exceedingly cultivated and subtle mandarin." He fought against Mme. Arman's distaste. France was a frequent subject of difference between them. She was obstinate: "I love his style and his mind; I like neither his character nor his manners." But Lemaître was tenacious and insistent; his insistence tempered the severity of Mme. Arman's judgment and succeeded in opening to France a heart that might otherwise have remained closed against him.

On the day when Lemaître saw himself eclipsed by France in the Avenue Hoche, he was greatly astonished and considerably annoyed. Not without malice, he took pleasure in reminding France of the time when he was able only with great diffi-

culty to obtain an invitation for him to the Wednesday dinners, where he received scant attention. One may judge as much by these two letters from Mme. Arman de Caillavet to her son:

"My dear Gaston:

"I have a Lenten Wednesday today—the Frances and du Bled. I must look after the pastry. Caro has accepted for the twentieth, but I have only one half of the replies for Wednesday, and as you are not here to rouse me, I am afraid I shall yawn myself to sleep. Mme. Renan writes that her husband is very ill, and that his doctor forbids him to go out evenings. I have invited the Pozzis, also. The G——s are giving me the great pleasure of staying away.

"Good-bye, my darling. I admit I miss your tyranny. You have so well unaccustomed me to freedom that I do not know what to do with it."

"My dear Gaston:

"I have just displayed an activity that will seem touching to you, perhaps. I have written four invitations for the twentieth (Caro dinner). The Pozzis have accepted for the thirteenth, but as Lemaître seems undecided, I have had the idea of again taking up Loyson, who has addressed an enthusiastic letter to Leconte de Lisle.

"Maurice [12] turned up again yesterday. He has lent your grandfather the speech he read at the distribution of school prizes at Braguemont. It is a pretty example of style that probably cost Dumas very little effort, but which Maurice could never in this world have written.

"Serge Napoléon is still in his incubator; as for Alexandre, it appears that he has grown in wit and behaviour. At the same time, I learn from another source that they spare themselves nothing to bring him up badly.

"I had news from France yesterday. He said that my letter had become lost, gone astray, and then been found. It sounds like a story to me. He has sent me a photograph of Saint-Valéry which does not greatly stimulate my curiosity. Your father has just written to ask him and his household to Capian. I confess I should be greatly annoyed if he accepted for the family, and should find a way to sidetrack them. If he comes alone, it will be different."

Mme. Arman found "a way to sidetrack" them, and they did not reach Capian that year.

By 1886 the friendship between Mme. Aubernon and Mme. Arman de Caillavet had grown very cool.

[12] Her brother, son-in-law of Alexandre Dumas. He had a country place at Braguemont, near Puys, where Dumas spent his summers.

Whereas ten years earlier, when Mme. Aubernon was complimented on her young friend, she would smile with satisfaction and reply: "It was I who invented her," she could no longer hear without irritation the praise which her intimates bestowed upon Mme. Arman, and she was vexed whenever she learned that some people went to Mme. Arman's as frequently as they came to her—more frequently even. She took umbrage at the success of her who was becoming a rival, for she wished Mme. Arman to shine, but only on Mme. Aubernon's stage. She desired to guard jealously and exclusively those whom she considered an attraction, and her rancour was meted out in proportion to the price she attached to Mme. Arman's presence in her salon. When she felt that "her Léontine" was able to get along without her guardianship, and to found a rival salon, she dissembled her anger for a considerable time, but the clouds piled up. They burst one day in the course of a very lively scene which Mme. Aubernon provoked with Lemaître. She had just been informed that Lemaître had refused to dine with her in order to dine in the Avenue Hoche. We find an allusion to this blow-up in a note from Lemaître to Mme. Arman:

"I may as well tell you frankly that I have been asked by Mme. Aubernon on Wednesday the four-

teenth, and you know in what circumstances I declined her last invitation!

"Please be good enough to excuse me, and allow me to hope that I may see you some other Wednesday."

Despite this, Mme. Arman agreed to stay with Mme. Aubernon at Trouville this year as usual. She wrote to her son, who was then at Capian:

"I have put off my stay at Trouville as long as I could, but I cannot altogether escape going there. I am enchanted to see that you are still enthusiastic after a visit which has already lasted almost a week. This consoles me a little for the worry over the heavy expense in which this property has involved me and will probably continue to involve me.

"What has become of literature and our beautiful French prose with all this? Not that Nature and solitude are not often a source of inspiration, and even a fecund source; but this is true for more dreamy and more sentimental natures than yours.

"There is much talk here of a book called *La France juive;*[13] a sort of polemic involving all the

[13] "It was not upon its appearance that *La France juive* created a great stir. Drumont wrote (as well as I can recall) this sentence: '*La France juive* was in the publisher's storeroom for two years before a copy was sold.' Finally, one day a newspaper article (which certainly did not appear in the *Gaulois*, although I cannot remember where it did appear) brought the book to light. It had a fabulous success which was stimulated immediately by the celebrated Drumont-Meyer duel, in the course of which Arthur Meyer, editor of the *Gaulois*, grasped Drumont's sword in his left hand. I have come upon a little booklet by Gyp, with drawings by Gorguet, which was punningly entitled *Une Gauche célèbre* (for '*une cause célèbre*'!)."—*Extract from a letter of the Comtesse de Martel.*

well-known Jews. The story of M—— and that of J—— are told, among others. The book will amuse you.

"Good-bye, darling. Enjoy yourself as much as you can, and do not forget Molière altogether while learning the local dialect."

"My stay with 'the widow' [14] will be cut very short. I leave for Trouville on Thursday. Therefore, if you write by return post, address your letter to me at the Manoir de la Cour-Brûlée, par Trouville (Calvados). I shall stay a week or ten days, and after that I may have a proposal to make to you. We'll talk about it some other time.

"It seems that Maurice has consulted Cassagnac about his duel, and has been advised to remain quiet.

"France is writing an article on *La France juive*. I hope that he will do something good with it. Good-bye, my darling; we shall see one another very soon. Try to get used to the horrible idea of coming back.

"Who is the Bordeaux girl for whom I have the honour to provide silk stockings and gloves?"

MANOIR DE LA COUR-BRULEE, TROUVILLE.

"I should not have postponed my coming away if Mme. Aubernon were not to be alone and if,

[14] Certain of Mme. Aubernon's friends called her "the widow," although she was merely separated from her husband.

profiting by the presence of others, I had been able to avoid leaving her in solitude. I was forced to go up to Paris, where I had an appointment with Dr. Hardy. I saw your father, who was leaving for Puys the same day or one or two days later. He was still undecided. Maurice came to dine with us three days running. He is not hard to feed; he eats nothing but spinach and other greens! He said it was very careless of me to let you shoot. He told us also that at Puys you regularly tipped over a glass at all your meals, which denotes very little precaution in your movements. I suppose you must lead your happy-go-lucky life.

"Farewell, my darling. We are having lamentable weather again. It has been raining since this morning. But that is the usual thing here. When it doesn't rain, it is accidental."

Back in Paris again, she wrote to her son:

"You are living a pastoral existence, so that if you were a poet, I might expect bucolic verses of you. I am still amazed at your enthusiasm, and I understand nothing of your hatred of Paris. Reading your letter, one would say you lived in some sort of slime here, some dark hole into which sun or light never penetrated, where life appeared so bitter to you that you had to employ all your strength to get away from yourself.

"My darling, there seems to me to be no sense of proportion in your sentiments or in your expressions. I am scolding you both from a moral and a literary angle. If you speak of things with so much exaggeration, you lose your serious sense of life, your taste, and your analytical tact. You become unjust and rhetorical. For my part, I am for sober people with a sense of proportion, against the exalted and the lyrical; I prefer—and you do too, I think—Voltaire's style to that of Rousseau. All this is not meant to lessen the pleasure you take in your stay in the country. But I do not wish this pleasure to partake of despair, and I want no invectives in your enthusiasm. Grandfather, to whom I spoke of your letter, said: 'Gaston has a peasant's taste.' That is as false as can be; on the contrary, your tastes are artistic and literary, and very cultivated. That is why you irritate me a little when you misprize so completely everything of this kind that Paris has to offer. . . . After all, you are a child, and like all children you exaggerate; what I am saying is intended principally to forewarn you against this absolute fashion of arbitrary judgment, which is not the mark of a penetrating and delicate mind.

"And now enjoy yourself as much as you can, and do not grow sad over your return."

The strained situation existing between Mme. Arman and Mme. Aubernon was not long in coming to an irreparable break. When Mme. Aubernon learned that Dumas, Lemaître, Brochard, Pailleron, and several others formed an intimate circle in the Avenue Hoche from which she was excluded, she could no longer contain herself and gave free rein to her anger. Her fury reminds one of that of Mme. du Deffand against Julie de Lespinasse: the same complaints and the same indignation. Like the blind old marquise, Mme. Aubernon cried out that she was being robbed of her friends. Mme. Arman received her reproaches with entire calm; she had no feeling of guilt. But the disruption in which these quarrels ended was precipitated by that between Dumas and Mme. Aubernon. He left her salon, of which he was the idol, with a violence which surprised everybody. The reason he gave did not appear to justify such an outburst: he demanded that Mme. Aubernon break off relations with the entire D—— family, because he had discovered young D—— in the act of making a declaration to his daughter Colette. His demand was out of all proportion to a forgivable fault. Mme. Aubernon, who possessed a great fund of good sense and was very fond of the D—— family, refused to do as he demanded, and maintained that the offense was a mere peccadillo. Dumas, upheld by his

son-in-law, was all flame and fury. Mme. Arman, whose brother happened providentially to be Colette's husband, pretended to share Dumas' indignation, which she really thought ridiculous. She was enchanted to have an honourable pretext, as part of the family, to break with Mme. Aubernon. Her desertion of Mme. Aubernon's salon was accomplished under the guise of an act of loyalty to her supposedly outraged family. In reality, the two women could no longer endure each other.

Most of the frequenters of the two salons continued to visit both. Only France refrained from returning to Mme. Aubernon's. She had irritated him time and again by the discipline of her dinners, where all private conversation was forbidden and where one was called to order by a furiously shaken bell at the least sign of disobedience. France had been reprimanded several times for violation of the immutable rule respecting general conversation. He loved fantasy, and he was very soon of the opinion that there was no room for it at Mme. Aubernon's table. Any constraint appeared to him at all times insufferable. He was even more relieved than Mme. Arman to escape from an intimacy that was a burden to him.

One day he met Mme. Aubernon by chance, and he was forced to make some explanation. "Is it true," Mme. Aubernon asked, "that you tell people

you will never come again to my house, and that my dinners bore you?" "Madame," answered France, "perhaps I have said something of the sort, but it was nothing people should have repeated."

Mme. Arman appreciated the discreet homage France had rendered her in deserting Mme. Aubernon's salon for hers, and in September, 1887, she invited him to bring his wife and daughter to Capian, in the Gironde. Nevertheless, she continued to speak of him in a superior tone. She sent the following to her son, who had preceded her to Capian:

"Your sunrise is good; there are several successful pictures in it, and the effects are well prepared. It is in the manner of Chateaubriand. I am sure it would not go down in university circles. The Anatoles called in the afternoon the day before yesterday. I returned their call yesterday, and they are to come again later today. I haven't invited them, though. We shall have time enough to enjoy them at Capian. Begin to put the rooms in order, and fix the plates to the walls of the dining-room. That will make our arrival more cheerful.

"Good-bye, my darling. I hope that you are enjoying yourself, and that your memory of the pleasures of Dinard is not ruining for you the very rustic life of our poor Capian. Amuse yourself by dreaming of the future, and let your dreams

be the most beautiful possible. There will always be time to make them less so."

"My dear Gaston:

"We may not be able to arrive before the end of the week.

"I saw the Anatoles Saturday evening, he trembling and stammering as usual in the presence of his imperious spouse. He had made a little plan for our joint departure which she demolished immediately. I shall let them go down by themselves. They are probably very upset, for since then I have made no attempt to communicate with them.

"Your father met Brochard this morning. He is leaving in the evening for Brittany.

"Fill the vases in the drawing-room, and the little baskets, too. Look after the lamps, and see that they are filled.

"Good-bye, my dearest Gaston. Go on enjoying yourself. I need your enthusiasm to make up for the bitter disappointments I meet here, of which there is no lack."

"My dear Gaston:

"Your despair over the sale of Capian is a little premature. In the first place, the essential element is lacking—I mean a purchaser; in the next place, I don't want to bring any unhappiness into your

life, and if your contentment here below is bound up with this property, I shall keep it. I hope, however, that this juvenile passion will last and that if you do become disenchanted, you will not some day regret this bad investment, for just now, at least, it represents a deplorable investment.

"No news of France. I shall leave on Monday or Tuesday. . . ."

"We are leaving on Sunday, Grandfather and I, but you will see the Anatoles before us; they are going by the State Railway, and your father will join them at Bordeaux on Sunday morning.

"We shall have magnificent weather in which to run about the countryside. I intend to take you with me in the small carriage, and to leave the large ones to Grandfather and the Frances."

Gaston, however, went off to Spain with a friend, not stopping to receive his mother or her guests. She wrote to him:

"The cravat and gloves left yesterday. Perhaps you will not need so many, for 'the Spaniards are not particularly shy.' Still, it is never amiss to have too many weapons.

"Grandfather and I leave tomorrow; your father left yesterday, and the Frances immediately after him."

A few days later she informed him of her disappointment over the France household:

"The Frances arrived Monday evening; she very unprepossessing, and he preoccupied by two articles he has promised for this week, so that thus far my pleasure in them has been slight.

"As we have no horses, and procured some only with difficulty, Grandfather determined to send for his own, and Alba made a solemn entry in the courtyard a little while ago.

"We shall soon be able to drive Valérie [15] about the country, but you will not be here to put this haughty person in her place from time to time. . . .

"I hope that you will be coming back soon. Valérie has the most urgent need to be tamed."

Meanwhile, Mme. Arman was interesting herself more and more in France's work, and her influence was soon to make itself felt. If she did not give him a taste for work, at least she inculcated in him the discipline of a daily task. She insisted that he accept an offer to write a weekly literary chronicle in *Le Temps*. He might with equal justice have addressed to Mme. Arman the thanks he proffers

[15] Valérie was the name of Mme. France. ". . . She was ravishing at twenty-two. She seemed exactly like a daughter of France. Later, she grew much stouter, and her teeth became crooked. Her feet and hands were marvellous, and her skin was admirable. She was a very rare blonde." (*Correspondance* of the Comtesse de Martel.)

to Hébrard, the chief editor of the newspaper, in the preface to the first volume of his *Vie littéraire:* "You have made of me a regular and periodical writer. You have triumphed over my laziness." It was not Hébrard who "tormented" him daily to begin or finish his article for the *Temps,* or the *Univers illustré.*

M. Fernand Vandérem recognized this in the article he wrote for the *Revue de France* shortly after France's death. Speaking of the sudden transformation in France, he says:

"It was as if, after twenty years of existence in a library, a man were to throw away his books with the determination to live an active life, and suddenly feel upon his shoulder a hand forcing him to resume his seat at his desk. Not to sit and read any longer, however; not to lose himself in day-dreams; but to write a continual stream. And thereafter we see this idler, who had not published three books in twenty years, bring out one after the other, in the space of five years, *Balthazar, Thaïs, L'Etui de Nacre, La Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque, Les Opinions de Jérôme Coignard, Le Jardin d'Epicure;* and he, the skull-capped scholar of yesterday, gives us a novel of society love, *Le Lys rouge.* Was this a sudden explosion of belated fecundity? No. Rather the methodical and obliga-

tory exploitation of the intellectual capital accumulated by France in the preceding twenty years; the setting to work of all he had gleaned, in innocent interest and amusement, from books.

It was not "his friends," as M. Jacques Roujon says in *La Vie et le Caractère d'Anatole France,* but his friend who "put his pen in his hand almost by force." In witness and in gratitude for this active solicitude, France gave his friend a beautiful copy of the *Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* with this inscription:

"To Mme. Arman de Caillavet, this volume, unhappy because it was written neither near her, nor for her. Very respectfully and very affectionately,

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

It was of her he was thinking when he wrote later, in the *Jardin d'Epicure:*

"Woman is the great educator of man. She teaches him the charming virtues, courtesy, discretion and that pride which fears to be importunate. To some she displays the art of pleasing; to all the art of not displeasing."

For the New Year, he always sent her, instead of

flowers or sweets, books containing agreeable inscriptions:

"Allow me, dear madame, to send you this little book which is slightly ridiculous, but whose ridicule is melancholy."

"To Mme. A. de Caillavet, who possesses so delicate an appreciation of the Louis XVI. style, I respectfully submit this late Louis XVI. novelette."

"The only cleverness of which I am capable is not to try to hide my defects."

"To know, in order to love."

He gave her also a variety of autographs for her collection. Among them we find Taine's opinion of France's *Les Noces Corinthiennes:*

"Dear Sir:

"I am afraid that I have not succeeded in my venture, for I have had no answer thus far. I wished you to be offered the post that your learning and your talent deserve. I wrote to a person in authority, but on this newspaper, as on a great many others, the people with taste are not always those with authority, and the people in

authority do not always possess taste. Your essay on Bernardin de Saint-Pierre received particular praise. What will become of it, I do not know.

"I returned yesterday from London, and found the volume you were good enough to send me. There is nothing like verse to teach one to write good prose. Concerning your verses, I venture to say that you succeed even better when you speak yourself than when you make others speak; therefore I prefer *Leuconoë* to the drama of Corinth. The first verses, particularly, are admirable. The Sicilian landscape is delightful, and perfect in local colour. In the drama or idyl, the ancient costumes and the exact fidelity to archæology hamper the spontaneity and vivacity of the dialogue. Goethe himself, whom you quote, only half succeeded here. He is much better in *Iphigenia in Aulis*.

"I have also found in the *Temps* an article on George Sand and the literary landscape upon which I congratulate you. You are very right to praise this great artist, who is now being neglected and is probably the greatest, the most natural, the truest artistic genius we have had in a century in France. The choice of your subject is perfect: these are the real subjects of literary psychology; they bring us rest in the middle of this Sahara of positive sciences and ultra-coloured mirages in

which we are drying up. Write more articles of this kind; I am sure they are noticed and remain in the minds of those who know. If you follow this line, I recommend to you the landscapes of Heine, which are probably the most beautiful and vivid ever done; compare them with those of Hugo, Gautier, Flaubert; you will see that Heine works with fewer colours and secures better effects.

"Very cordially yours,

"H. TAINE."

Here is what George Sand thought of the *Noces* and of the same article:

"I thank you for the splendid book you have sent me. It is as beautiful and fresh as antiquity; I wept once again, as I read it, over the unwholesome work of Christianity, that false interpretation of the word of Jesus, more than ever twisted and calumniated in our day. Your verses strike at the very heart of this lie; they are beautiful because they have great significance. Write more of them; avenge life for this doctrine of death. Thank you again for the splendid article in the *Temps*. I am more grateful and more highly honoured than ever since reading it. . . .

"GEORGE SAND."

In another letter we see Taine giving France

advice about style and reproaching him for having introduced lamas in Robinson's isle:

"Dear Sir:

"I have just reread your biography of Bernardin. My impression remains the same: it is sober, rich, and close-knit; full of a sustained and discreet irony, very easy to read, just and exact. The words *courtil* and *orée* disturbed me a little, for scarcely one reader in ten will understand them. The *lamas* on page 3 are yours; they do not figure in *Robinson Crusoe*. On page 8 the *Lessons of Empire* seem to me doubtful; I should say *lessons of royalty,* and even then! On page 14 you have *distant* from Versailles; would not *éloigné* or *loin* have been simpler?

"This is all, and you see that it is little enough. My congratulations once more, and my thanks.

"Prévost-Paradol, who had read a great deal of Bernardin, used to tell me there was material for an essay in the form of his sentences, in his literary methods. Sainte-Beuve has treated of this, but no complete analysis has as yet been made."

Taine's opinion of the *Crime de Sylvestre Bonnard* is given in this letter:

"Dear M. France:

"Thank you for your volume; it is doubly welcome, once for itself and again as a counter-poison

against the contemporary novel. My only objection is that its two parts (the pyre and Clémentine's daughter) do not hold together. All the rest, style and ideas, is charming, gentle in effect, calm and noble. This modest, resigned, contemplative and affectionate old philosopher is a poet without realizing it. His long, grave sentences, so aptly coloured and so moderate, form the picture of his soul. As an affectionate friend of cats, I shake your hand for the first two pages on Hamilcar; they resemble, with the addition of a shade of discreet irony, the best pages of Charles Lamb and of Cowper.

"Remain what you are, and repay us in this way for so many contemporary talents led astray by the imitation of painting, a taste for evil odours, a wilful admiration for the platitudes of the common people and the middle class. These disciples of Henri Monnier and of Courbet, on the pretext of verity and exhaustion, will end by disgusting us with life and rendering literature a thing of horror.

"Yours with friendly greetings,

"H. TAINE."

With the exception of Lemaître, Mme. Arman's friends were displeased to see France occupying an increasingly greater place in her existence. Gas-

sou, the sportsman, the refined man of the world, detested artists and writers. He had a limited view of things and of people, and he hoped to turn Mme. Arman away from a man he called a "journalist" and a "Bohemian." Mme. Arman never hesitated between distinction of manners and that of mind, and she allowed Gassou to drift away, who brought to her salon nothing but complaints, an air of dissatisfaction, and elegant cravats. She missed him very little. Her regret was greater over Professor Brochard, who also drifted away, although more discreetly; she continued to maintain affectionate though rare intercourse with him.

Sully-Prudhomme, who was fond of France, came occasionally to dine in the Avenue Hoche. But he seldom went out, and excused himself on one occasion in the following note:

"I am very touched, dear Madame, by the gracious note I received from you. I see in it a witness to your indulgence for my long silence. Alas, it has become difficult for me to reconcile the demands of my work with the charms of the society which most attracts me, and where my connections have so greatly multiplied that I am in debt to them all. I was overwhelmed by work last winter. Please believe me yours, with the most friendly respect and the greatest gratitude for your kindness,

and plead my cause with our dear Anatole France, who is perhaps vexed with me because of my unsociableness."

"MADAME:

"I am greatly touched by the kind memory you retain of my call, and confused by the obligation you feel to return it.

"I shall be at home tomorrow, Friday, between 5:30 and 6:30. If your errands should take you into this neighbourhood, I shall be very happy to resume the conversation you were good enough to hold with me and which your lively and enlightened taste for letters rendered so interesting to me at your home yesterday. . . .

"I found with your letters two issues of the *Revue internationale* which I have not had time to read through, although I have thumbed their pages. I shall ask you, if I have the honour to receive you on Friday, to point out to me the articles I might most profitably read in these issues, which, I suppose, were sent to me by you."

Paul Hervieu was more assiduous. He wrote many letters in which he rendered homage to the intelligence of Mme. de Caillavet, and to her gracious hospitality:

"Wherever you deign to be, Madame, your pres-

ence of itself creates a various and charming world. . . ."

"Please believe, Madame, that I know no intellectual joy greater than to fill my modest place at the table over which you preside. . . ."

"I thank you very much for the infinite grace with which you have had the kindness to extend to me so much of the hospitality of your home. I should be charmed to share, within my means, your intellectual emotion in the presence of the jousting which will not fail to take place between M. Anatole France and M. Emile Ollivier; and for this occasion I have succeeded in putting off to the following Wednesday the engagement I had made for Wednesday next.

"Paul Hervieu."

In August, 1888, Mme. Arman de Caillavet took the cure at Saint-Gervais and wrote almost daily to her son, for her preoccupation with him was great and constant:

"I was seriously upset by the list of winners of the Interscholastic Competition published in the newspapers. You will have seen that Trarieux got a first honourable mention. You remain alone,

then, in your dishonour, alone among those who ought to do better, I mean. I regret to trouble the pleasure of your sojourn by these considerations, but aside from the fact that this subject is near to my heart, I must tell you that I am not spared, either. Your father accuses me of being mainly responsible for your failure. Perhaps he is right. Perhaps I have let you waste your time. I have been blamed for allowing you to take part in plays."

Gaston already loved to write and perform little plays. His mother encouraged him.

"My dear Gaston:

"I shared your discomfiture at an interval of twenty-four hours. I had hoped that this year, the last of your school years, would be crowned by some recognition or other, to prove that you were not lost in the crowd of mediocre pupils.

"You had told me you were doing better than Halévy, and when I see that he and Brunschwig have carried off the first two prizes, and that your name doesn't even follow theirs, I feel more than vexation; I am tempted to hold myself somewhat responsible for your failure. I have encouraged your worldliness; I have helped you select pearl-grey clothes; I have allowed you to follow your own whim instead of reacting as I did when you

were younger. I realize that my task would not have been easy, but at least I should have attempted it. Well, what is past is past; let us not go back to it.

"If your apparently good resolutions persist, you may still be able to make up for lost time. But you are flighty, my darling, very flighty, and what you say to me now while you are filled with disappointment will perhaps not persist, and you will end by believing that the supreme aim of life is to lead a cotillion with an orchid in your buttonhole.

"I reared you in the respect and admiration of the things of the mind, but this year you slipped out of my hands, and I felt you slipping. You told me you needed diversion; I let you talk that way, and now we see with pain that if you follow this inclination you will become one of those young idlers who stroll mornings along the Avenue des Poteaux. And you absolutely must become something better than that.

"I am afraid you no longer have the taste for reading you once had. I beg you to think about this. . . .

"Your departure brought ill luck to Saint-Gervais. We have had two days of rain without cessation. All the gaiety left, too, when the D—— family went. N—— wanders disconsolately under the trees and refuses to be consoled. A disillusion-

ment: it is not for her husband that Mme. L—— adorns herself so beautifully, but for the friend who accompanies them, Comte de L——, who left with them.

"Greetings to Maurice and Colette.

"LEONTINE."

"Thanks for your letter which reached me last night. I congratulate you upon finding the time to write to me, surrounded as you are by attractive diversions of all sorts; yet I am going to quarrel with you immediately. Here you are at the end of your studies, you have no other guidance except such as I myself shall try to provide, and with the great freedom you have always enjoyed it is probable that my voice will be blown away in the wind. Be that as it may, I shall continue to try to make myself heard.

"In the first place, you write too badly, your hand moves off at a helter-skelter pace like so many unbridled horses. You absolutely must put a little firmness and form into your writing. I assure you that I should have a very poor impression of the person who wrote what I received from you yesterday. I do not maintain that handwriting is a sure criterion of character, but yours is so lacking in measure and in command of self that it makes me uneasy. Besides, it is not the handwriting of

a person of your age, but rather that of a mediocre fourth-form boy.

"Secondly, do not try to imitate Victor Hugo; it might bring you ill luck. And then, even in the work of this great poet, kings should not go to bed in their robes. That is, unless they are kings of Bohemia they usually possess nightshirts.

"You will probably think me very peevish and sullen; the reason is that I feel a great deal of remorse on your account. I have left you too much to yourself, and have not drawn the best out of you. Fortunately, nothing is lost yet. But I beg you to try to love literature."

"We have had a desolate week here, except for two days. It rained Tuesday and Thursday, and is raining today without ceasing.

"Nevertheless, a fair number of people have come here, but they are all insignificant, and I keep more to myself than ever. Handsome N—— tried to climb Mont Blanc, to use up his sorrow, probably; but after raising the interest and nerves of the establishment to the highest pitch of worry, he returned this evening, his tail between his legs, having climbed nowhere at all, very ugly, very dirty, and totally devoid of interest.

"The 'Chatterbox' has ended by forcing his wife

to bed, where she lies with her mustard-plasters on her back.

"Your father announces his coming on the eighteenth. Mme. F—— is looking forward to seeing something marvellous. She will probably be disillusioned.

"By the way, they accuse you in Paris of having left the gas on in the bath-room. It was only discovered late in the evening. You are decidedly not careful enough, my darling; this carelessness may lead to unpleasant consequences."

"My dear Gaston:

"I did not write you 'four large-sized pages of reproach.' I told you what I thought and felt, but you are still a schoolboy, and you take that to be a dressing-down. However well one may be forewarned, one is still greatly disappointed, nevertheless, and the success of those who were your competitors all winter has increased my regret. Far from telling you that you are irreparably condemned, I am surprised to see success escape you, and I attribute the fact to defects of a secondary nature, but defects which persist in you, since you continue to be beaten.

"What I reproach you with also is that you resign yourself too quickly, and perhaps too easily, to whatever happens. Doubtless it is idle to cry over

spilt milk, and philosophy itself teaches resignation; but it seems to me that, on the other hand, neither must one's impressions be so fleeting as to leave no trace behind. All the lessons of life thus become lost; one would never progress, nor improve.

"You see that I am taking advantage of the distance that separates us to write to you in the tone of a pedagogue and to pass along to you the modest fruit of my reflections, for in our ordinary life and when we are together, it is rather I who am the pupil and who undergo the admonishments. And of the two of us, you are surely the more interesting; whether for good or for ill, I have already travelled more than the half of my allotted way, while you have almost the whole of yours to go yet. For this reason, I want to see you armed, well armed, and shielded, too. The mind is a thing that must be continually adorned and beautified; thus far yours has had only the essentials; it is attired in a respectable suit, very clean and decent, but I should like it to wear a more distinctive, more elegant, more refined garb. . . .

"I had reached this point when the post brought a new letter from you.

"I maintain what I said: I don't like a king sleeping in his robes, whether Taine wrote it or anybody else.

"LEONTINE."

"Good weather has been long in coming. Finally, since yesterday afternoon, the sun has moved hesitatingly into our canyon, and in the sky we can see only a few ragged clouds stubbornly lingering on the mountain tops.

"Saint-Gervais has become almost brilliant in the past two days. Arrivals are numerous, the second service at dinner is two-thirds filled, and this morning I saw the dawning of a skillfully dyed blonde with a lorgnette and an ultra-Parisian *chic*. She is accompanied by a dark-haired gentleman who may very well be merely her admirer.

"Poor 'Chatterbox' has gone from one drama to another. While he was sending his eaglets off to Paris and awaiting the cure of his wife before going to Italy over astounding roads, he learned that his house had caught fire. His wife and he left yesterday in a great rush. The poor woman was hardly in a condition to be moved. Epilogue: last night the 'Hairdresser' furtively slipped into his pocketbook a photograph; it was a portrait of 'Chatterbox's' wife.

"The ballroom is very animated evenings. Several young people have arrived, and the handsome N—— is no longer the cock of the walk. He would be a somewhat dilapidated cock in any case, for he came back faltering but not unwounded; without glory, but not without scars.

"I read in Sunday's *Figaro* the advertisement of the performance next winter in the Rue Dumont-d'Urville. I hope this announcement has been made in time, and that we shall not have to rush to get seats.

"Does it ever happen, in the midst of your gambolings, that you read a book? Remember that you are no longer a schoolboy on a holiday, that the habits you are now forming will be the habits of all your life, and that I shall not submit to having in you a sort of pocket-edition Englishman, avid for sport, nautical pleasures, and tennis. That sporting life is very nice, but one must absolutely be something else if one does not want to be simply a stomach and a muscular system."

"A calamity has fallen upon Saint-Gervais since yesterday. It happened entirely without warning at about six o'clock: Mme. Beulé arrived! And since she has come, farewell to rest, farewell to liberty, farewell to my love of solitude.

"She posts herself like a spider in one corner of the courtyard, and all the poor flies are lured into her web. When I go out, she goes out with me; when I take refuge in a corner, she follows me; when I retire to my room, she looks at me with stupor and anger. I am stricken with dismay."

"I don't know whether this letter will still reach you at Puys. Your father arrived last night. We had arranged his arrival so carefully that we muffed it altogether. But the interview with Mme. F—— and Mme. R—— passed off very well. He is returning on Wednesday, and I don't know if there will be time to send you the sweets from Boissier's. However, if they reach Puys after you have left, there will be no harm done, except that you will not be able to eat them.

"Saint-Gervais is now filled with scandal and rumours of all sorts. I'll tell them to you some other time, if I do not meanwhile forget them.

"Mme. Beulé continues to persecute me. I have, fortunately, found her a chess player and several whist partners, but she still has a few hours free.

"I am happy to know you are amusing yourself. Although 'it is hard for me not to see you surrounded by teachers and lessons any longer,' I think after all that we should live according to our tastes, and that it would be too silly to mourn because a plum-tree gave no apples. I shall try to develop you in the best way I am able, but it will always be in the direction of your choice."

"Can you imagine that your stay at Puys and the explanation you gave of our break with L. de N—— has given rise to a prodigious to-do? L——

wrote to Valérie, who wrote to your father, demanding a formal deposition to the effect that she had said nothing, which she would show to Dumas. Dumas must have accused her in a letter. Write me exactly what you said. It is Valérie who has informed me of all this. L—— is furious with you."

"I continue to linger on. Here I am still at Saint-Gervais. I shall leave on Thursday.

"It is Mme. Beulé who is the pivot and centre of all these idle, gossiping women; it is about her that all these souls circle, worried about their neighbours' affairs.

"By the way, you don't know what a train of powder you fired by your words to Mme. Dumas. Dumas has written to L—— that she carried tales to Valérie; L—— has written to Valérie, calling on her to deny that she ever spoke; finally, the same L—— has written to your father, saying: 'You are doubtless not aware, Sir, of the ugly things your son has said about me to Mme. Dumas. One pays dearly for dining with you, Sir.' I want very much to know what you said, and I am terribly sorry you said anything at all.

"I shall send France's articles to you in Paris. There is one on Saint Anthony; the last one is missing."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet, who wrote almost daily to her son, neglected her friends, and they complained. France wanted to know where she was, and why she did not reply by a single word to his letters. A few days later there were fresh reproaches, new lamentations. ". . . Why do you not send me a single word? . . . You are right to forget me, but only if it brings you pleasure. . . ."

In the end she sent him news of herself, but he thought her words too few.

"Dear Madame:

"Reassure me. Are you well? Do not the waters fatigue you? Is the weather good? So black a tempest is blowing this morning that one is benumbed by it to the bottom of one's soul. Your torrent interests me greatly. You must bring me back a little pebble from it, one of those little white stones on the edge.

"I am sending you my *Temps* article, which you must read, as I wrote it, without giving it too much thought. Living alone, I have scarcely any news for you. Mme. de B—— has written me a letter that is slightly comic in its elegant melancholy. She tells me that Robert was seized by a bilious attack in the Black Forest. That is merely sad. But listen to what follows: 'I cannot answer for his

life,' said a German doctor—a doctor who looks after Lotte and Dorothea—'and I can answer even less for your own. You are too beautiful. Your beauty will kill you.' She reported these words to me with touching innocence. Really, she has the innocence of an artificial flower. She is as intoxicating as a paper rose.

"Do you wish more news? I have one bit left, and that is all. I lunched today at the Parc aux Princes with you know whom. There was M. de Blowitz, General Annenkof, who is very agreeable, and Lemaître, who asked me why I was not at Capian. I replied that I never danced before the music began. The music, the delightful music, the beautiful harmony, is you, Madame. But let me tell you that I am horribly sad. Work bores me, and I am like that grandee of Spain whom I knew in his declining years long ago in the little cafés of the Latin Quarter. He was a gigantic devil who had carried his terrible moustachios and his sublime dreams all over the world. He used to say: 'I have learned the vanity of things. I am nothing, and I have nothing. There is left to me only meditation, and meditation is a damnable bore.' Still, my Spaniard had made the tour of the world, and I have not. I have never left my burrow. It seems to me I should be happier if I were somebody else. Who? I don't know. Anybody else. I do not

like myself. But what I say of myself, dear Madame, is not designed to disgust you with me. Gaston has not been to see me.

"I beg you, dear Madame, to continue your inestimable goodness to me and to believe me your respectful and devoted,

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

"It is true, then, dear Madame, that you have not altogether forgotten me, since you have written to me. You remembered that I live on your alms. I thank you. And since you wish to know where our poor friend has gone, he has gone to Alexandria. He attended one of the performances in the theatre. He saw Thaïs playing the rôle of Polyxena in a pantomime tragedy. In the desert he met a naked old man, and I am afraid that Brochard will say I have stolen this naked man from him, for he is a skeptic, and you know that our friend insists there were no skeptics visible to the naked eye before he showed them to us. They are his property. If I write their story, they will be my offspring.

"Meanwhile, this Abbot Paphnuce is beginning to amuse me. He affords me distraction in the midst of life and things. He was born of our conversation, but that is our secret.[16] How I have

[16] France conceived the idea of *Thaïs* while reading the plays of Hroswitha, a tenth-century German nun. Signoret's marionettes performed one of her comedies, and France devoted one of his *Temps* articles to these plays (*Vie littéraire*, third series).

bored you in relating his adventures. What you say about Mme. Beulé gives me a profound impression of fatality. To encounter her on the edge of a torrent! She is as ineluctable as destiny. This morning, in the Avenue Friedland, I met Mme. H——, who looked a little rejuvenated. She is a ruin, but a modern ruin. She has an air of youth made all of innocence. She sees nothing, feels nothing, understands nothing. That gives one immediately the air of a child, and goes very well with yellow hair. She said something about *le langage des oiseaux*—the language of birds (*sic*). That is all the English I know. The first page of the Robertson method.

"Is it possible, dear Madame, that there is not a single little stone on the edge of your torrent, that torrent which, *like all of us, never hears anything but itself?* Only you can say these things which make one shiver painfully.

"Suzon sends you kisses, but she urges me to end this letter. She thinks a stroll is the greatest joy in life. Is that true? . . .

"I kiss your hands most respectfully and affectionately.

"Anatole France."

"P.S. Tell me the exact date of your return so that I may present my respects without delay."

His admiration of Mme. Arman's talent as a letter-writer is very frequent in his letters of this period: "You say such beautiful things about the pines. I take it that they are so beautiful, so venerable, and so grave that you forgive them their sadness."

"Do you really know, Madame, that your letters are marvels of taste, of sense (yes, of sense; I know that annoys you, but I find them very sensible), of criticism, and of irony? I have a beautiful one on Venice; this one on the pines is even more imbued with nature and soul. Ah! if only you would write! . . ."

"It is nevertheless a fact that I cannot write to you, and that I shudder when I touch my pen."

Their correspondence was interrupted while they were at Capian, and was resumed as soon as France returned to Paris.

"DEAR MADAME:

"Having only just reached Paris this evening, Tuesday, I want first of all to tell you what an enchanted and grateful memory I retain of your hospitality. You made my stay at Capian truly de-

lightful, and you are the cause of my finding Paris infinitely sad and gloomy. Let not this delay your return to it, however."

Wednesday.

"DEAR MADAME:

"I am finishing this morning at the library the little note of thanks I began yesterday. Have you a great deal of wine, and was the harvest satisfactory to the mistress of the vineyard?

"As for me, I have many reasons to be dissatisfied here, and the least of them is that the Senate officers are unpleasant to me. On the other hand, Hébrard, whom I saw this morning, said to me that the Gironde and its vines had inspired me wonderfully. We must congratulate ourselves also upon our *Univers* articles. I am sending you a paper in which you are quoted, which is very honourable.

"As I turn my sheet I see that this paper blots, and if I dare nevertheless send you a letter so frightful in appearance it is only because of your great kindness, of which I take occasional advantage.

"I spent Monday in Bordeaux, upon the insistence of P——, as you will readily understand. I am really very fond of him. He is not very happy. He has dreams which make him suffer because their ideals are so commonplace. But he thinks you

charming and Gaston very intelligent. And then there is something touching in the way he cannot avoid making his ugly wife bear children. When he is reproached with it, he replies with gentle resignation that this is life. Be a little fond of me, dear Madame. It will be charity. I kiss your hands with the most affectionate respect.

"Greetings to Gaston."

M. Louis Barthou's article in the *Revue de Paris* (December 1, 1924) entitled "Anatole France, Clerk in the Senate Library," tells us that France had a great deal of difficulty with the administrative officers of the Senate. "Serving as a subordinate librarian, France was not an exemplary employee." For this reason, "the relations between the chief librarian and his subordinate became gradually more strained and ended in 1888 in a sharp conflict." The chief librarian, M. Charles Edmond, "summed up in one word—zero—the result of the work accomplished by M. Anatole France." The regulations of the Library allotted to each employee his vacation, and fixed its time. On July 16 France was invited to take up his task again, his vacation being presumably at an end. On October 3, M. Charles Edmond took note of the fact that France had not turned up for a single day's duty at the Library, and he informed the administration

of France's "persistent misbehaviour." On October 9, France was ordered to resume work immediately. He reappeared at the Library on the eleventh. But his reappearance, if the chief librarian is to be believed, was not marked by any excess of zeal: "He limited his service to intermittent appearances," and "he remained constantly outside all participation in the daily work of his colleagues." Called to the Secretary-General's office, he received a "remonstrance" or an "admonishment."

In France's letter quoted above, he accords to these administrative thunders only a word of disdain. He is thinking most of all of the excellent effect of his stay at Capian upon his articles. He renders delicate homage to the discreet aid of Mme. Arman during this period, and shares gallantly with her the compliments he has received. For those who knew France and Mme. de Caillavet at the time, this letter dissipates the atmosphere of legend one is tempted to attribute to tender memories of by-gone days, to the exaggerations of friendship, and the disfigurings of time, and lends to such memories a power they could otherwise not possess. The intimate friends of the household in the Avenue Hoche saw Mme. Arman de Caillavet second France in his work. He considered her worthy, at various times, to think and to write in

his name. The handsomest tribute that the master paid his modest collaborator was to permit her to slip a few sentences or ideas into his work from time to time.

We are not to exaggerate Mme. Arman's share in France's work. Her rôle was at once more humble and more vast. She served above all as a marvellous stimulus to his genius by ceaselessly adding new materials to his fund of erudition, new themes to his meditations, and by tearing him from his reveries and forcing him to create. She delved in foreign literatures, which she knew perfectly, to find subjects of tales and articles for France. She translated everything that seemed likely to interest him. From these innumerable translations, France gleaned here and there an idea, a picturesque detail, or a useful bit of information. She spent long hours in libraries, even when travelling, for the unique purpose of finding something that might awaken the curiosity of her friend. She had only one aim in life: the work and the fame of France. Tirelessly she took notes of everything the master said in the course of his chats and strolls, and gathered considerable files of material in which France was later to dip. Thanks to this methodical tenacity she saved from oblivion an important part of France's thought which might otherwise have

vanished, and which France, in his negligence, would never have noted down.

M. Emile Hovelaque wrote in the *Revue de France* (April 1, 1925):

"It is to Mme. de Caillavet that we owe the France of the great years. She revealed him to himself. She made a worker of this idler. By dint of infinitely intelligent insistence, she gave him the habit and almost the taste of writing. He used frequently to recognize his debt, and would often say: 'Except for Mme. de Caillavet, I should have accomplished nothing.' This debt was enormous and various, for never had an Egeria surrounded her great man with more skilful care. . . .

"His fame was the sum of her ambition. She worked for it tenaciously and guided it with genius. She guided and maintained France by continued pressure in the straight path outside of which his dawdling, ease-loving genius would have made him an aimless idler to the end of his days. She drew from him treasures which, in his nonchalance, he probably did not know himself to possess. She created a downy nest for this soft creature; inspired this timid man with self-confidence; organized the material existence of this great child, spoiling him to satiety, smoothing all the ways before him; she was his will and his conscience."

Several years later, in the first edition of

Crainquebille, France wrote: "To Mme. Arman de Caillavet, this little book that I should not have written without her, for without her I should write no books." This copy was bequeathed by Mme. Arman to the Bibliothèque Nationale.

This modest collaboration brought into the life of Mme. Arman not only the profound satisfaction she naturally received from it, but also several events of great significance. She owed to it her meeting with Loti, and the immediate cementing of the friendship which bound her to him whom she called "the Magician" and whom she admired as much as France.

One day, as Loti was thanking France in Mme. Arman's presence for an article he had written mentioning Loti, France replied: "Rather should you thank Madame, for it was she who wrote the article."

This scene was related several times by its participants to their friends, among them Professor Dumas, who remembers it, but cannot, unfortunately, recall the precise article in question.

On the other hand, Lemaître's long friendship cooled as the result of an article written by Mme. Arman and published over France's signature. The article was really friendly in tone, but Lemaître's susceptibility found it too reserved in places. He dined in the Avenue Hoche on the eve-

ning of its appearance, and complained about it to France in the presence of ten or twelve guests. France stammered out explanations and excuses. "As a matter of fact," said Lemaître, looking alternately at France and at Mme. Arman, "you didn't write that article. It is well written, but the writing is not yours. I am very curious to know him—or her—whose style and intelligence you esteem so highly as to lend to them your signature." Mme. Arman, flattered, acknowledged that "she often helped M. France when he was pressed for time." Lemaître complimented her highly, but never forgave her.

In a letter from Mme. Myriam Harry, we read:

"Jules Lemaître told me that at this time he was exceedingly embarrassed in his choice between the salons of Mme. de Caillavet and Mme. de Loynes. He very nearly followed France, but Mme. de Loynes chained him to her by debts he could not disavow. She had his first play, *Révoltée,* produced at the Odéon."

Gratitude may well have chained him to Mme. de Loynes, but the slight rancour induced by this article was not foreign to the cooling of his relations with Mme. de Caillavet and France. Later, the Dreyfus affair came between them definitively.

Yet, even at the height of the polemical battle, while each was champion in an enemy camp, Lemaître still felt for France the affectionate admiration of his earlier years, and would say: "We must not speak ill of him: it is an offense to the Muses." And he ranked France's books, said André Beaunier in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* (November 1, 1924), "among those he wished most strongly that he had written himself."

When France sent him *L'Ile des Pingouins* in 1908, with a friendly note, Lemaître replied affectionately, and ended his letter by this declaration: ". . . My monarchism and my Catholicism forgive you almost everything, because you have an admirable genius."

France had become so habituated to working beside Mme. Arman that when he was far from her he felt himself unable to work. She used to stay on in the Gironde until the end of November. France always returned much earlier to Paris. We owe to this separation many charming letters.

"Dear Madame:

"Forgive me if I bore you again with my chatter, but you have left me with so sweet a memory of your hospitality that Paris appears sad to me and I

have no taste for anything except to converse with you.

"It seems to me that it must be good to be among your vines, even in the wind and rain. I feel that evenings before your fire of vine-shoots must be delightful. I am working hard and badly, in a sort of torpor. All day long I hear people talking politics, and I assure you that it is a great bore.

"On Tuesday I am to dine with the General, you know where. There will only be three of us. Even Lemaître has not been asked. That is fame! but it is not happiness.

"Mme. Thierry came to interrupt me while I was writing in the dining-room. I escaped to chat with you at my ease. But I am in the grip of a gloomy sadness, and I fear it will increase. The only thing that has taken a bit of my time, and a little of my interest, since I returned to this Paris which is as sombre as I am, is the stove of a chestnut vendor. I contemplated it from behind a corner street lamp for five minutes. The stove on which this Auvergnat roasts his chestnuts is in no way remarkable, it is like all the others, and that is exactly why I was so moved at the sight of it. It brought back to me my childhood and my whole life, all the returning winters after the flowerless springs. Ah, dear Madame, my life contains nothing but chestnut-stoves. You alone brought to it

a flower. Come back and bring me your light and the sweet warmth of your soul. Paris and winter are too dark and too cold without you. I am afraid to die without seeing you again.

"I kiss your hands, dear Madame, with the most respectful affection.

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

CHAPTER II

(1889 to 1896)

LETTERS TO GASTON IN THE ARMY—GENERAL BOULANGER — "THAIS" — MARCEL PROUST — CHARLES MAURRAS — ANATOLE FRANCE DIVORCED — FRANCE AT CAPIAN —"LE LYS ROUGE"—VOYAGE TO FLORENCE —ANATOLE FRANCE AT LION-SUR-MER.

In 1889 Gaston was serving his "voluntary term" [1] in the Army at Versailles. His mother wrote to him on the first day of his service:

"My darling:

"Thank you for your little note, but it was written before you underwent your test and only half reassures me. I am waiting impatiently for the second bulletin, the tale of your first night in the barracks, your awakening, the apprenticeship to the hard life you are about to lead. But I do not wish to lessen your courage, and I shall take the matrons of Roman history for my model.

[1] At this time, military service of five years was obligatory. However, boys of less than twenty years who had finished their secondary education were then permitted, upon the payment of 1,500 francs, to enlist for "voluntary service" and serve only one year.—*Translator's Note.*

"Your father has just sent you the newspaper. His zeal for you is now unequalled, and he has reproached me for not yet having written to you.

"Good-bye, my darling; you are always in my thoughts. I try to imagine all the things you are doing, which seem to me almost like the labours of Hercules.

"I send you many kisses and wish you strength, courage and gaiety."

"My poor unfortunate darling:

"I am thinking with great pity of you, for you must be very cold in that city open to all the winds, while you handle iron and steel. I hoped that this trial would be spared you, and I hope now that it will not go on too long. Perhaps it was even worth going through. We never enjoy the sweet things in life until we have known its cruelties, and we always have more compassion for the sufferings of others when we have suffered ourselves.

"You see that I am moralizing beautifully from my corner beside the fireplace. I was reading Saint Augustine a little while ago. He became a great saint after having been a sinner and a professor of rhetoric; the two are apparently not incompatible.

"Mme. P—— arrived and interrupted me to tell me of Y——'s success. It seems that she refused a genuine Persian prince at the cotillion, and she is

not to be consoled, even though she danced with her admirer, M——. She has the stuff of a Manon in her. The success of your grey suit is general.

"Here we are far from philosophy. Yet one must keep it in view, drive away sadness and discouragement, say to oneself that life is a changing spectacle, that yesterday does not resemble today, while tomorrow will be different from both . . ."

In every circumstance where her affection could comfort him, she was delicately inventive. During this year of military service, which he endured without enthusiasm, she wrote to him every day in order to give him courage and revive his gay spirits. Once or twice each week she went to dine with him in a little restaurant near the barracks. He chafed restlessly under the discipline of his new life, while his superiors and his comrades endured his mischievousness even less well. This led to conflict and punishment:

"What is it now, unhappy child? Is it fresh punishment or the result of an unfortunate currying?

"Good Lord, good Lord, my darling, how little adaptable you are! Lepelletier told me that his cousin had told your captain to look out for you; but the more highly you are recommended, the more punishment you receive.

"I met Mme. P—— yesterday. She held in her hand a letter from her son, written from the Embassy, which she was wetting with her tears.

"Good-bye, my darling. I hope that you are no longer plunged in despair. Punishments are like the cholera, caught when one is afraid of them.

"I was forgetting to tell you that the little baron is engaged to a Viennese who has two millions. He reached Vienna Thursday morning and was accepted on Friday evening. They had never seen one another before."

"My dear Gaston:

"This note will be brought to you by courier, like diplomatic correspondence. Let me know if you expect to arrive tomorrow evening. . . .

"The little baron will not be married in Paris. It appears that the pomp observed in the family he is to enter is so great that six carriages are permanently in attendance at the door. Ten lackeys are employed in service at table. According to the discreet praise one hears of the bride, she must be very ugly. . . .

"I met him last night! He greeted me, spoke to me, and is coming to dine on the thirtieth. He is nice-looking, but his speech is common and his general aspect is heavy."

"He" is Boulanger, then at the zenith of his career.[2] Society women predicted that he would do great things. Meanwhile, they fought over him; he was invited everywhere, feasted, adulated. Mme. Arman de Caillavet, little dazzled by all this fury and incense, remained cold and lucid and judged the General without being in the least influenced by those who saw in him a great statesman and a future dictator. She made fun of France, who took him seriously and "wore the red carnation" which was the insignia of the Boulangists.

M. Jacques Roujon tells us that "there was a time when we saw France wear the satisfied air of a man to whom a ministerial portfolio has been offered: *Anatole France, Minister of Education and Fine Arts!* The triumph of Boulangism might perhaps have brought us this! . . ."

However, if Mme. de Caillavet did not give way to the popular fever, she did give way to curiosity. She wanted the General to come to her house. She wanted to study him at leisure and observe him in private. This she could not do at the houses where he was idolized.

"My dear Gaston:

"Fatalism has its good side; it inspires great resignation and does not perhaps reduce one's activity,

[2] General Boulanger was rather vain of his appearance, and lacked breeding. He had very pretty hands. Old Mme. d'E—— complimented him on them at dinner. "Ah," cried the general, "you should see my feet!"

for Napoléon was a fatalist. It is a concept of life well suited to sodden brutes and to great men, and I cannot really class you among the former.

"We have a Leconte de Lisle dinner tonight, heightened by Houssaye and Laffite, who seems to me somewhat incoherent, although once in a while harmony bursts forth from the chaos.

"We are still without news of Boulanger, except for the card upon which he wrote his thanks in gigantic letters."

"I have your note. Forgive me if I do not come; I am very tired. I am asked out this evening, but I do not know if I shall go. It is to Mme. de la V——'s. They say Boulanger will be there. That might be a way to clear up this matter of the dinner, which is still in the air.

"The feast last night was rather tumultuous. Laffite chattered like a magpie. Leconte de Lisle raged, and Houssaye was full of distinction.

"Good-bye, my darling; I am sad not to be going to see you."

"The General has written me two pages in a style devoid of buoyancy to say that he will come on the twentieth. He calls me 'dear Madame'! The rest of the letter was probably written by a secretary.

"An informal dinner yesterday. Without brilliance.

"Boulanger's election is still disputed and uncertain, but it seems that the bill-posters are for him, and his are almost the only speeches posted up. . . .

"I went to call on Mme. M—— and found her somewhat lacking in the grand manner. She had with her a friend who wore a curl in the middle of her forehead and an enormous crescent in her hair."

"My dear Gaston:

"I am really distressed to see you so far the victim of politics. The General's sensational success is the price of the imprisonment of many poor devils in barracks. Of course his failure would have had the same result.

"Wednesday I shall have Pailleron, the Hérédias, the Munkaczys, and Andrieux—a fairly interesting dinner. A week later, Renan, Bardoux, etc., etc. And Boulanger on the twentieth!

"We must absolutely get you a furlough."

"Last night Pailleron was very agreeable and in good form. Cernuschi, like Lepelletier, was missed. And the truffles went unappreciated! I have written to him this morning about his nephew.

"We shall actually have Boulanger. He is coming on the thirtieth. Everybody wants to come.

Pailleron asked to be invited. Only, I admit I am afraid of what the newspapers will say."

Finally the great dinner took place, and Mme. Arman was able to chat with the General. Here are her impressions:

"MY POOR DARLING:

"I am really afflicted to see you so taken in by the stupidities and the excitement of politics. I firmly expected you last night, and I was dreadfully disappointed not to see you come in. Because they are afraid of the exploits of a few blackguards, they assign to duty unfortunate fellows who thus lose their furloughs. I wonder if governments have always been so stupid, or if it is the governed who used to be more blind. If you want to know what I feel about the General, I can tell you that he made me marvel at history; I wondered if all the great figures which appear so imposing from a distance were not made great by a uniform, a plume, or the infatuation of the people.

"It appears that my words at dinner were shockingly bold, and that people asked one another if I were not losing my good sense.

"The party seemed to me rather brilliant. Mademoiselle B—— came crowned with violets, and as she took it into her head to speak of you, I

told her you were sorry not to have been able to wait for her.

"M—— thinks he was the object of Boulanger's prolonged and flattering attention, and that the General is counting on him for his list in the approaching elections; but his engagements with the opportunists, represented by H——, the prefect, render his situation somewhat delicate. He will so arrange as to disappoint none of the parties.

"I am afraid the books I sent are too serious to charm away the boredom of garrison life."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet, who had so exact an opinion of the man and his party, was not surprised at the appearance of a series of unexpected events: the refusal of the General to march on the presidential palace, the Elysée, that evening when the passers-by in the Rue Royale could see and guess what was happening between himself and his adherents in one of the brilliantly lighted upper rooms of Durand's restaurant; the cleverness of Constans, then Minister of the Interior, who, having proclaimed widely the imminent arrest of Boulanger, left him the time and the means to fly, knowing that if he were imprisoned he would be the object of enthusiastic sympathy, whereas in exile he would inspire only contempt.

"Boulanger's flight is interpreted in various ways; I think that however much his action may be lacking in greatness, he was wise to escape from the fury of his enemies.

"He is a fox, not a lion. Grandeur of soul is an excellent thing in three-act plays; in life and particularly in politics, it is trickery. Henceforth, we will look for heroes in ancient history only. Society is divided into the clever and the non-clever, and each scorns the other."

"Today, May 5, we are not celebrating the august anniversary by any external manifestation; the house is not adorned with flags, and all the Avenue Hoche knows now that we are not the friends of those in power, that our hearts are with him who is on the other side of the Channel!"

"My dear Gaston:

"Nothing particularly new here. Your father arrived Wednesday evening in time for dinner. Coquelin was very funny. Next Wednesday I shall have John Lemoine and Bardoux, and thereafter an Ollivier-Laguerre dinner.

"I have been charged by a lady to offer a house in London to the General. You see that I am becoming one of the agents of the party; but don't fret, I have not lost my head; I am still only curious about the affair.

"I visited the Exposition on Tuesday. It is sort of Spanish-American, rutilant, brilliant, incandescent, at once barbaric and cheap; but of course those who have come from afar, from Sumatra or Java, to see it, will return with dazzling memories of it. And it is probably for such people that the Exposition was organized. We wearied skeptics would make any organizers despair of their efforts. . . .

"Paris has already become impossible. All the barbarians have invaded us with their glass beads and multicoloured plumes; soon we shall see them dressed in skins. And the Eiffel Tower still stands in its stupid arrogance. And beneath it stand admiring boobies. I should like it to fall and crush them; there would be some profit in that.

"Good-bye, darling. Write and tell me if you need anything. You know that I want you to have all the comfort and ease possible, since I am responsible for your existence.

"I send you many kisses and hope you will keep your gaiety and good humour."

Gaston left Versailles in the spring for the minor manœuvres in the country, where young soldiers were trained in preparation for the major manœuvres held in September. The weather was abominable. The young soldier complained of the

humidity, which made him rheumatic. Always eager to allay his troubles or his boredom, she offered to come to see him:

"I shall try to go to Chartres. I know the cathedral, but it is often the things one knows that one most enjoys seeing again. The proof of this is that we know one another thoroughly, and are eager to be together again.

"The picture you draw of your tent life is deplorable. I hope that your native pessimism has exaggerated somewhat, for to read your description would make any one think of Job and his dung-hill.

"I had hoped to bring Laguerre and Ollivier together last night, but Laguerre sent me a wire from London to say he was detained there. I shall have to try that another time. Poor Ollivier would like very much to be tugged in the train of the party, but he is a very heavy load to tug, and I doubt that he will realize his wish.

"I am going to the Exposition again in a little while. This will be my fourth visit. I have not yet attained the pitch of enthusiasm one ought to feel at the sight of this marvellous evidence of French genius. One is supposed to swoon with ecstasy in the machinery building. Young Hervieu maintained to me that the Eiffel Tower was an admirable bit of art. America has van-

quished us, and we are forced to accept our defeat. Fortunately, it sends us pretty girls, and we must take our revenge through them. I am giving you evil counsel; therefore I stop."

Gaston was a little frightened at the notion of his mother's appearance in camp. He feared the scorn and joking of the soldiers before this distinguished woman who still looked very young. He wrote her to give up the plan. His pretexts were evidently poor, for she insisted gently:

"It seems to me impossible that I should not be able to see you during a rest period. Currying horses cannot absorb you so completely as not to leave you one free moment, and I cannot believe that gunners travel like a harem, completely hidden from strangers. Let me know then, immediately, either by letter or telegram, where I am to meet you—and the sooner the better, for thus I shall have less travelling to do.

"Good-bye, my darling; I expect a note telling me where you will be."

Gaston surrendered. She saw him at Nevers, the visit passing off without difficulty. She comforted him, gave him remedies for his ills, and left him in a better frame of mind and health when

she came away. By this time the minor manœuvres were about to end.

"The time is coming, as the Scriptures say, and everything has an end, even our troubles. I am very happy to learn that your thoughts are turning to literature, and I agree with you about Voltaire's style. It is a good style, perhaps the best of them all. True, it lacks colour, but nowadays that is so overdone that I love sobriety, brevity, nakedness, and grey tints, provided they are irreproachable.

"I don't know what made you think my style like France's, and I cannot complain of the comparison, but I see no connection between them. I wrote as I now write long before I knew the author of *Paphnuce*."

Gaston had resumed the monotonous life of the barracks. He was allowed fewer furloughs than his mother might have wished. Therefore she continued to send him current news and society gossip.

"I had a slight hope that you might have secured, not from the clemency but from the brutishness of L——, a furlough for this evening. I see that nothing has come of it, and that Lamy and Laguerre are to hold their political bout in your absence. I think the dinner will be amusing.

"I saw the baroness yesterday, back from Vienna. She complains bitterly of her little baron. It appears that his attitude before, during, and since the ceremony has been deplorable. She lives in fear that he will desert the unfortunate girl whose fate is tied to his own, and return to his opera-dancer person. She even wonders whether, carrying his scorn to its limits, he deigned to consummate the marriage for which so many torches had been lighted and so many wreaths woven.

"R—— is engaged, too. He is to marry his poor beauty of dubious origin, which offers no assurance of happiness. I suppose that since, with all we know of life, there are still people who marry of their own free will, we should not despair of humanity; its blindness is fortunately irreparable. Great heavens! Suppose it were one day to open its eyes! But there is no danger of that.

"You see, I am feeding your pessimism."

She was not neglecting her friends, as this extract from a letter of the period shows:

"*Paphnuce* is finished and has been turned over to Brunetière. We do not know yet if the *Revue* will take it."

The *Revue* is of course the *Revue des Deux Mondes,* of which Brunetière was then editor.

Paphnuce is *Thaïs*. Soon the latter title replaced the original one. They were not entirely easy in their minds about Brunetière's reception of the novel, for he had refused a novelette by France only a short time before. We find this mishap summarized in two notes written by Mme. Arman:

"As for the tale, it was sent to the *Revue* more than a week ago, but I believe there has been no reply yet. B——, who appears to be one of the judges of that learned body, has let drop that the tale is thought rather irreligious. If they do not take it, the *Nouvelle Revue* will publish it. . . ."

"B—— has failed in dealing with Brunetière, and I deserve this failure, for I should never have entrusted the commission to that idiot."

Brunetière agreed, however, to publish the novel, but he asked that certain cuts and changes be made. This exasperated France, as we see in a note from Mme. Arman:

"The *Revue* will print *Paphnuce*. But those idiots insist that it be cut in order that they may publish it in two instalments. Only Rabusson and Delpit have the right to more instalments."

France the rival of Rabusson and Delpit! How

comical that seems now! Finally the matter was arranged.

"*Paphnuce* has appeared with the title *Thaïs* in the July 1 issue of the *Revue*. The first part is short; still, despite the cuts, I think it reads very well, although I have heard no opinions of it yet. . . ."

"Ollivier was fairly interesting at dinner last night. This is probably the last grand affair; thereafter we shall have only a modest boiled chicken to offer to L—— as a summer treat."

More and more, Mme. Arman was serving as France's secretary. She undertook lengthy research work in libraries. She made translations. She "prepared" articles and corrected proof. She invented ways of rendering service to him, and took upon herself all that was irksome in his work. We find many proofs thereof in their correspondence:

"I have been amusing myself these days by writing a short preface to Benjamin Constant's *Adolphe*. The thing was requested of Anatole and will appear over his signature. I want to allow my talent to ripen before risking myself under a

pseudonym. Just now I am making note of a few ideas for the next *Temps* article, which will be on Maupassant's novel."

". . . The Vittet prize has just been awarded to our friend. True, it has been divided between him and Yriarte, making 3,000 francs for each. Halévy and several others think the division unjust. They are promising France a seat in the Academy by way of compensation. . . .

"Good-bye, my darling. I am sorry that I shall not see you for so long a time, but even as we speak of it the time runs on, and there is always that consolation."

She was already thinking of the Academy, and it was she who, profiting cleverly by the occasion, suggested the idea of "compensation" to Halévy. Meanwhile, France's work dominated all her thoughts. Part of his preface to the *Princesse de Clèves* was written by Mme. Arman de Caillavet. Here is the passage, printed in italics:

". . . From many points of view, this seems admirable. It is none the less true that Mme. de Clèves puts a very high value on virtue, since she does not think it too dearly bought at the cost of her husband's death and her lover's despair (taking

the word lover in the sense it had during the seventeenth century). 'What do you think of this?' I asked a woman whose bold and penetrating mind I admire. This is what she chose to reply:

"'*Except that she lacked preciosity, the Princesse de Clèves is a typical heroine of the circle of Mme. de Rambouillet. She is divine, as were Clélie and Arthémise. Her beauty has no equal nor her soul any weakness. But Mme. de Clèves is not a factitious heroine, and the springs of her action derive from reality and owe nothing to fiction. The scruples that guide her are very human and entirely devoid of idealism; wisdom and reason, which are temporal virtues, shape her life and govern her feelings. And even more than wisdom, it is her notion of her high social station that inspires and safeguards her. She possesses, in its highest degree, the cult of appearances, and her splendid attitude of haughty pride probably softened much of her secret pain. I imagine that for this beautiful woman, whose psychology and particularly whose moral system were less perturbed than ours, the world must have seemed a brilliantly lighted drawing-room which she had to cross with dignity and nobility. Then, with a majestic curtsy, one retired, and that was all. It was the triumph of etiquette, of an etiquette capable even of heroism, for there are times when more courage and more*

strength of soul are needed to smile in the midst of a feast than on a battlefield.

" '*The Princesse de Clèves possessed this sort of courage. She possessed it to the point of oblivion, to the point of self-immolation. She is without weakness, but she is also without pity. She permits two men to despair and die, one of whom at least she loves. She is without remorse, since she remained irreproachable, and nothing could seriously disturb the beautiful harmony of her conduct. She is a proof of what is produced by very rigid social sentiments and a very severe rule of life with nothing superior to these principles themselves. She is also an example, edifying, perhaps, but desolating, too, of what morality and virtue may do for the happiness of mankind. Faced by this loyal and pitiless soul, one begins to muse about the others, about the heroines of love who were weak, who were guilty, but who were gentle. And one wonders if, at the bottom of this high virtue, there were not a pride which consoled her for everything, even for the ill she accomplished.*'

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

M. Maurras has written on this subject: "The woman whose bold and penetrating mind France admired was Mme. de Caillavet. I remember this positively. The lines in italics are hers. They bear

her mark, her style. Pages of the Conquet edition (1889) offer the surest proof of it. I remember very well that France said to me of Mme. de Caillavet, after reading me this passage: 'It was she who wrote that.' "

From Saint-Gervais, where she had gone for her annual cure, she sent news of herself to her son, adding:

"Nothing new. I am here in a stupor and like a fish out of water. I haven't even any new ideas; I can't write my usual article; I try hard enough, but the light touch is absent.

"My head is as heavy as lead."

"My dear Gaston:

"I have nothing to tell you about Saint-Gervais. I live more than ever alone and by myself, and that from choice, for everybody here is sociable, expansive, and full of spirits. My neighbour at table is a swell who belongs to the club in the Rue Royale and wears a white carnation in his buttonhole. I have lent him a book called *La Haute*, and we talk about things that are not at all transcendent. I have been obliged also to subject myself to two ladies, one of them the Comtesse A——, whose ugliness exasperates me and who pronounces '*japse*' instead of '*jaspe*.' But all in all I escape from the

crowd, and they see me pass like a furtive shade that does not get on with human beings.

"I am following the impeachment trial of Boulanger, and I admit that both parties disgust me utterly. It is as if one were in the servants' quarters listening to all the scandalous titbits of the neighbourhood. These stories give off something immensely, prodigiously ridiculous. The accusation is ridiculous, the defendants are ridiculous, the Senators are ridiculous, so gravely met to listen to these trashy stories and incapable of a word of protest when the prosecutor shouts that 'this General had passed the age of pleasure.' All this is pitiful, and I can see no acceptable future for France in the gangs now fighting over her. Well, since we are powerless to do anything about it, let us think of other things. Today, I must say, I find it hard to think gay thoughts; Saint-Gervais is inundated by rain; the mountains, the pines, and the rocks weep together. When it rains here you would say it was going to rain for ever, for nothing is to be seen beyond the narrow strip of sky over the canyon. Snow fell last night on the pine-needles, and the moisture glides into one's room and one's mind."

She wrote him from Biarritz in September:

"Here I am at Biarritz since Friday, but if you

count on my finding time to write, you count without Grandfather and his craze for diversion, music, dancing, and the Casino. Better yet, we have rooms there! We are in the very centre of the rejoicings, in the temple of dancing, gambling, and music, and at night we fall asleep to the sound of languorous waltzes from which I drag your grandfather away only with great difficulty. Yesterday, at the first sound of the square dance, he cried out: 'Lord! How I am enjoying myself.' Poor man! I don't want to spoil his joy; I follow him, amazed but courageous, and I look without flinching at the gaudy couples moving to the sound of the violins under the electric light.

"The only thing I love here is the sea, but I love it devotedly. I could spend hours and hours watching the magnificent changing play of its colours. I get a unique pleasure from looking at the breath of its powerful life coming and going as if it were alive, this changing, unconscious sea. It is beautiful. Unfortunately, the strand is spoiled for me by people in white coats and yellow shoes, by taut, gaudy sunshades, by the latest fashions from Madrid, the crowds of people piled up in heaps like oysters. All this is horrible.

"I say, the word seems to have gone forth among your friends. M—— was at Saint-Gervais; S—— and all his family are here. He is a conceited fop,

while his brother is a little more conceited and a little more of a fop even than he. They are bosom friends of the M——'s here. There are also many F. de P. de S——'s here, but all that means nothing to me. I shall go on escorting Grandfather, and chatting with the sea."

"My darling:

"Here is a letter that will go a-hunting you, for you have probably left Nevers and it will run about after its soldier. A poor soldier, delivered up alternately to the dust of the roads and the mists of the Loire! Well, such is life. One is very rarely sheltered from both heat and cold. As I write to you, the Casino music is playing in all its fury, and Grandfather, in ecstasy at the window, is trying from a bird's-eye view to guess at the value of the doll-faces covered by all the hats he sees below. That provides him with an exercise of the imagination that is nothing if not charming.

"The sky here is so pure and the sun so brilliant that I have forgotten the colour of clouds. I should enjoy seeing even one, so quickly do I weary of the monotony of the sky. Clouds have at least a moving and tormented physiognomy like our own.

"We went yesterday to Fontarabie. It was not an easy thing to hoist Grandfather up the steep and very picturesque little street. The street, by the

way, is not so pretty as it used to be. It has been freshly painted and cleaned. Cleanliness, that crudely coloured barbarity, that enemy of warm tones, has passed here with its scrubbing-brushes, and has torn away the handsome garment of rusty gold that formerly lay over everything. The little cross streets have kept their stench, their brilliance, and their magnificent rags. The bell-tower of the church, which is ravishing, filled me with a mad desire to go to Spain. It gave me a vision of those charming towns, so incredibly fantastic, that must look like settings for an immense comic opera. I hope we shall be able to see them together some day."

"My poor little soldier:

"I am unhappy when I think of the hard life you lead, and I reproach myself for my exquisite dinners, my easy existence, and my feather-bed as I remember your mess-kit and your pallet on the ground. But the days are flying, and when they are flown it is always the difficult ones we recall with the greatest sense of comfort. They are like enemies one has beaten to the ground.

"I have been unfair to Biarritz. It is an ideal place for those who seek pleasure, and agreeable for quiet old people like me. I have even begun to become accustomed to the music; that is to say, no

longer to hear it. As for the surrounding country, it is magical. This little corner of the earth really seems made to bring joy to the eyes and the senses. Nature here is lovely and everything speaks of ease, tranquillity and joy. It is like a little world come up out of the earth, in which the cares, the miseries, and the burdens of life are unknown, where we pass our time breathing in the perfumed breezes, supping ices and lemonades, and intoxicating ourselves with the splendour of the sea and the sky. It is like the open-air celebrations of the southern towns, except that the celebration here is of rare distinction; nothing jars, nothing saddens, there are no beggars for leagues around, and in the little streets with their attractive shops you meet only the shopkeepers' wives with their overflowing baskets, and little boys who cry '*A la fraîche*' as they peddle their lemon sweets. And however recalcitrant you may be, as I was, you let yourself be won by the pleasant atmosphere of gaiety in the air. I think you would like it here very much.

"Good-bye, my darling. Take courage, and count the days."

CAPIAN.

"What, unhappy child! Have you had to add one more memory to those that army life will leave with you? Whatever did you do to deserve this terrible chastisement *in extremis?*

"Don't become too wrapped up in the thought of what lies before you, unless you are willing to undergo yet more disappointment and despair. Send me Proust's letter; it will amuse me.

"I send you kisses through the bars of your cell."

PARIS.

"I am writing this under a clear, clear sky and a splendid sun; it is a little cold, but not so cold that I cannot leave my window open. The avenue is covered with dry leaves, and the trees stand in poor, meagre outlines. I have observed that trees grow old badly in towns; they wither suddenly, without those lovely transitions of trees grown in a fertile soil. But enough of landscapes! We arrived Wednesday, one hour late because of a locomotive which burst between Etampes and Paris. Grandfather remained cool. Your father and Maurice were at the station to meet us; there was a contest between chickens roasting in the Avenue Hoche and others in the Avenue de l'Alma, but we dined at home.

"I went to see Colette this morning, because she is abed with an illness they cannot yet define. She spoke of you with the greatest cordiality. During my very brief visit, she found time to begin two quarrels with Maurice. I have, for my part, started several discussions with your father concerning what you are to do this coming year.

"Anatole arrived a little while ago as we were lunching. The question was canvassed with some heat. He is strongly against sending you to the University, as your father insists; nevertheless, he offered to take you to see Taine and Sorel. He said some things that seemed to me very logical. Afterward, he spoke to me of your attitude toward him. He is not angry with you, but 'Gaston is really rather mean to me,' he said. 'He tries to make me feel I am a parasite.' I hope you yourself will realize how unbecoming and absurd your attitude was.

"Good-bye, dearest boy. Thank you for the help you are giving me by staying at Capian to look after things. I want with all my heart to be able only to praise you, and I hope you will always act so that I may praise you forever. . . ."

Shortly after Mme. Arman's return to Paris, Marcel Proust was presented to her. He himself has described to us the beginning of his friendship with her and her son.

"I no longer remember who took me to see Gaston's mother. I know that I was about to leave for my military service, and that I must have been young because it was the last year of what was called 'voluntary service.' I do not know if Gaston served in the same circumstances. In any case, he

was finishing as I was beginning, and it was during brief furloughs that I met him at his mother's. He was so delightful to me that our friendship began on the spot. I wonder if in one of the three trunks in which my things are stored, I have not still the letter he wrote me then, when he scarcely knew me (it was in 1889, I suppose). For, having at that time an esteem for my 'intelligence' which it did not deserve, he wrote letters admirable not only for the sentiments they contained, but also because they were written with real care. There was a page on music as the science of numbers (inspired a little, perhaps, by M. France) which filled me with admiration. He nursed this friendship, born thus almost of our correspondence, with a kindness and an infinite thoughtfulness that I shall never forget. If you will remember that there were no taxicabs in those days, you will be amazed to learn that every Sunday evening, when I took the 7:40 train to Orléans, he would take me to the station in a carriage. This meant that he left at seven o'clock and did not reach home before 8:30, which is as much as to say that he went without his dinner. And sometimes he even came down to Orléans to see me. One's heart melts at such memories; how can we re-live them without sadness? The perseverance of his friendship was the more admirable, at least for some time, for the fact that almost

all his friends detested me. A certain L—— would not speak to me, and the same was true of G——, who lived in the Avenue de Messine. The other Paul, I must say, was very nice to me, but that did not last long. . . .

"My friendship for Gaston was enormous. I used to talk only of him at the barracks, where my striker, the corporal, and the rest thought him a sort of divinity, so that on New Year's day they sent him a little declaration by way of homage! Heaven only knows how it must have been expressed. In those days Gaston had not yet met Robert de Flers, and was even a little vexed by my fondness for his future collaborator. My affection for Gaston at this time had the effect of a vaccine with which I had been inoculated all unbeknown to me. It rendered me immune to the very acute sufferings I should have experienced as a result of my love for Mlle. P——. Knowing that they were half engaged, I allowed myself not the slightest hope."

The frequenters of Mme. Arman de Caillavet's salon saw Marcel very often on Sundays that year, crammed into his tight uniform, his head thrown back and hanging ever one shoulder, sitting, almost lying in one of the deep *bergères* whose overflowing cushions made his warlike dress seem absurd. He

used always to sink into a heap in his chair, as if overcome by a perpetual lassitude, which the future proved, alas, not to be a mere pose. He was always weighed down by a great fatigue. Although his face was serious and his great brown eyes were melancholy, his very white teeth lighted up his pale countenance, and his laughter broke forth on the slightest pretext. He was handsome, charming, and nice. This last epithet, which he used so often himself, best describes his character, his ways, his manner, his greeting, his willingness, and his friendship. Everything in him was nice. How good, how sensitive he was! How grateful for the slightest service or the tiniest attention! And how frightfully and unreasonably sad he would become if he were hurt, or if he thought he had reason to feel hurt!

Toward six o'clock on these wonderful Sundays, the young soldier would be stuffed with sandwiches and cakes and given others to eat "on the trip." Nothing was more comical than to see Marcel making his farewells about the salon, embarrassed in his movements by his military cap and his little packages, with Gaston hustling him along so that he might not miss his train.

After finishing his service, Marcel began to join Gaston and his friends at their tennis courts in Neuilly. He was not allowed to play so violent a

game, but he would come to chat, and the girls and their mothers who sat about him in a circle under the sparse leaves would listen devoutly to all he said.

It was he who brought their refreshments; he would always arrive with a huge box full of dainty things to eat. If it was hot, he was sent to a neighbouring shop for beer and lemonade, and he would come back panting under the burden of an appalling basket borrowed from the shopkeeper. Occasionally, a ball would land in the midst of the conversation and the cakes; the girls and the glasses would tremble, and Marcel would always accuse the players of aiming their shots "with malice aforethought." There may even have been a little malice in the shots, quite unknown to the players. Marcel's charm, and the tenderness that emanated from him and that he inspired in others, often irritated his comrades. They were a little jealous of it, and without any well-defined or disagreeable intention, they were not at all displeased to upset the "court of love" a little. This was the name they gave the chattering circle when they were in a poetic vein. When the game was ended, they came quickly over to rest "in the shade of the blossoming girls" and to enjoy with them Marcel's agreeable chatter. Many years afterward, apropos of a book he was writing, these memories of youth

returned to him and he wrote to Mme. Gaston de Caillavet: " . . . You will see blended into it something of the emotion I felt in those days when I wondered if you were to be at the tennis courts. But what is the use of reminding you of a thing which you have decided absurdly and mischievously to pretend you never noticed?" Gaston, for his part, had noticed it, and their friendship was temporarily clouded thereby. In another letter to Mme. Gaston de Caillavet, Proust wrote: "The only cloud that ever obscured our friendship came through the fact that we were both madly in love with you. I wanted the consolation of a photograph of you, which cast the poor lad into a natural and frightful state of anger." It is hard to imagine, in our day of snapshots, that the desire for a girl's photograph may have been the cause of perturbing the souls of two friends.

As a matter of fact, the love and the quarrels were not very grave, and no trace of these disputes survived, for three years later Gaston invited Marcel to be best man at his wedding. A note from Marcel to Gaston's daughter, written long afterward, proves that the efforts of the one and the anxiety of the other were equally vain: "When I was in love with your mother I did astonishing things in order to get a photograph of her, but it all came to naught. I still receive New Year cards

from people in Périgord whose acquaintance I then sought for the purpose of getting the photograph."

Marcel's parents wanted him to enter the diplomatic service, but his health made any career impossible. The asthma from which he had suffered since childhood made constant inroads. Mme. Arman and her son were the first to encourage him to write, and when he was ready to publish his first book, *Les Plaisirs et les Jours*, she persuaded France to write a preface for it, just as she persuaded him to do the same thing for Maurras and many others among her protégés. She employed France's growing fame to lend a helping hand to her young friends at the beginning of their careers.

It was not easy to persuade France to write a preface. M. Hovelaque had experience of that. Despite frequently reiterated promises, he was obliged to abandon hope in a scene amusingly described in his article in the *Revue de France* (April 1, 1925). France had sworn to write a *real* preface to a volume of articles and verse by their friend Paul Guigou. "Weeks, and then months, passed; still he talked of the preface without writing it. Finally my patience was at an end, and I went to call on him early one morning to deliver my ultimatum: a preface within one week, or the return of the manuscript.

"I found France abed under a mountain of

blankets. He was squirming like a worm and twisting feverishly a multicoloured handkerchief tied over his head in two knots like horns. He looked like an old devil caught in a trap. He was complaining in minute detail.

" 'Oh, how ill I am! Oh, how I am suffering! My stomach is swelled out like a balloon. I am like a woman with child unable to deliver. But you shall have your preface. I swear it. Don't offend me by doubting my word!'

"And while he moaned on, his astonishingly lively and intelligent eyes roved over my face, seeking the slightest sign of weakening, and giving the lie to his grimaces. And he went on in his nasal voice: 'I know confoundedly well I should have given it to you long ago. But you don't know, my dear friend, in what a state of misery I am. I am no longer good for anything. I am incapable of any work or any thinking. But I swear to make the necessary effort; I swear you shall have your preface, let's see, say on Wednesday. That's a promise. Trust me until then, and you will not be disappointed.'

"I left him squirming and moaning like a devil in a baptismal font, with the feeling that I had been tricked, full of bitterness and confirmed doubt. And when I returned to the Villa Saïd a week later, I was told that France had left suddenly for a cruise

with Mme. de Caillavet. I wrote him a letter breaking off our friendship, in which I gave vent to my indignation and my sadness."

A year later they were brought together again by Mme. Arman, who said in confidence to Hovelaque: "The next time you must come to me, for I keep his promises."

She always kept her word, for a promise was sacred to her. She never went back on her word, never acknowledged that there might be any reason to release her once it was given, and carried this scruple to the point of sending a handsome gift she had promised to a person with whom she had just ceased all commerce. When some one manifested his astonishment over this, she said simply: "I promised it," surprised that any one might believe she would break a promise.

Marcel Proust, who had been wise enough to obtain France's preface through Mme. Arman, gave her in gratitude a beautiful copy of his book with an inscription cleverly composed of phrases selected from France's *Vie littéraire:*

"To Mme. Arman de Caillavet, one of those women who, bred in the gentle realm of luxury and the arts, . . . lend to life, by the salt of their intelligence, . . . a fine taste unknown before them. . . . She had the soul of a philosopher without los-

ing any of her pride or her grace. No more charming woman can be known. There is none whose conversation is more gracious. . . ."

In 1890 France lost his father. He had never been able to be on time, and he was late at the funeral. Arriving after the others had gathered, he slipped behind the hearse and, as he walked along, saw a beribboned wreath on which he read: "To François N. Thibaut, his faithful employees." "Almost like one of Coppée's verses," he murmured. Nevertheless, he thought of his father with filial piety and always spoke of him with reverence in his memories of childhood. When, some years later, M. Ludovic Naudeau questioned him about his pseudonym, he wrote as follows:

"The name of France, which I bear in life as in literature, is not properly a pseudonym. It is a sobriquet older than I am. Born of a very numerous family of Angevin wine-growers who inhabit two or three villages near Saumur, my father's name was François-Noël Thibaut. But the people of the surrounding country called him by the diminutive of his first name, France. It is the name he kept during the eighty-five years of his laborious, modest, and honourable life. Usage, which is more powerful than law, imposed upon me the

name of France, which I bear as my father bore it." [3]

It was in 1890 that France made the acquaintance of Charles Maurras, surrounded by Félibres, a group of Provençal poets, on the platform of the railroad station at Agen. He conceived a lively friendship for him immediately. They visited Bayonne, Lourdes, and San Sebastian together. At Lourdes, they went into the miraculous grotto, where France said with a diabolical smile, seeing the gifts, ex-votos, and crutches: "I don't see any wooden legs." [4] "Dickens says somewhere that it is bad for one to bleed inwardly, but that to laugh inwardly indicated no good to others. France laughed inwardly. He derided everything, including—once his comfort was assured—himself as well as other men." I quote these words from M. J. Roujon's *Vie et le Caractère d'Anatole France.* He always made fun of all religions, and he was delighted to cover with sarcasm the humble offerings of the "miracled."

France went on to Capian thereafter, but serious difficulties prevented him from making a prolonged stay. This year again he was in trouble

[3] This letter, published in *L'Illustration* of October 18, 1924, was written off Ostend on board the Arman de Caillavets' yacht, *Zuleika.*

[4] In the *Jardin d'Epicure* France wrote: "Being at Lourdes during August, I visited the grotto where innumerable crutches hung as a sign of cure. My companion pointed to these hospital trophies and murmured in my ear: 'A single wooden leg would mean much more than all these.'"

with the chief librarian of the Senate, who, writes M. Louis Barthou, "reproached him in an unendurable manner with negligence of his work." Mme. Arman de Caillavet had long urged him to resign. He did so finally, and the Senate question was settled.

"DEAR MADAME:

"How are you and yours? Have you a good crop of white grapes, and a good crop of purple grapes? And does the moon still rise at the end of your road? Do you stroll in your little wood, and what do the leaves say to that? I have just reached Paris after a little archæological trip to Soissons, Laon, and Reims, where I lived with the stones and wondered if it were not better to sleep or to be stone, as the friend of Vittoria Colonna said, of whom Ollivier and Guillaume used to speak to us on those delightful evenings in the Avenue Hoche. I am going immediately to see if M. Arman is in Paris, by chance. I have begun a tale for the *Figaro;* after scrawling over a great deal of paper, it is still not very far advanced. It is the story of a lord who, like Ulysses, comes home to his château and is not recognized. His wife thinks him dead, and marries again. He is invited to the wedding feast. Having warred and travelled much, he is full of 'sense and breeding.' He understands that he must

remain dead out of courtesy, and so that nothing may be disturbed. And he goes back to the East, where, like Candide, he cultivates a little garden, but more philosophically. I tell you the story badly, dear Madame, but there is much gentle wisdom in the tale I am thinking of. It will not be hard to illustrate. But these are mere trifles. I am in very great need of you, dear Madame. I should like also to have news of M. Arman, of you father, and of Gaston. I hope to get it by stopping in the Avenue Hoche for a moment. I hope that you will be good enough to answer this. Deign to accept, Madame, the homage of my affectionate respect and my enduring attachment.

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

When Mme. Arman returned to Paris, Anatole France hastened to present Maurras to her. She received him with kindness. From their first chat together she felt an interest in him which soon developed into real affection. All her life she loved the ardour of youth with its enthusiasm and its anxieties. She knew how to combat its inevitable discouragements and triumph over them. How many young men she comforted in those decisive moments of their lives, those crucial periods of anguish or despair during which many new-born talents and careers founder and lose themselves!

How many men now at the pinnacle of fame or fortune remember that they were sustained by her during the most critical hours of their lives! She used to say, laughing: "I do not seek out people who have 'arrived,' because in general they arrive already wearied. I prefer to help youth attain its goal."

Charles Maurras has forgotten neither this friend of his early years, nor the benevolence of Anatole France. He wrote long afterward: "The welcome I received from them both is part of my most unforgettable memories;" and of the house in the Avenue Hoche he wrote: "I shall be happy to return to the charming house that was so hospitable to my ancient youth." For he was one day to disappear from that house because of a serious divergence in political views; but nothing ever obliterated from his heart the gratitude he felt toward Mme. Arman de Caillavet. What she did for him in the first year of their friendship is clear from their correspondence:

"I have come here to rest and to try to feel only agreeable sensations, for I have been ill, or rather ill again, since the beginning of August. Ideas escape from me, and I make no attempt to pursue them. I eat the fruits of the earth, which, this year, and for so shallow and poor an earth, are marvel-

lously heavy, paunch-bellied, and golden, and I also nibble at the mysterious '*poutargue*' which is the caviar of Provence. The only work of the mind that I am doing is an essay on M. France which will appear in the *Revue Hebdomadaire* as a preface to the *Rôtisserie de la Reine Pédauque,* if I may put it that way. But that is an exceedingly light task, and as natural to me as sleeping in the sun. Not that to praise M. France well is not a subtle thing, but I have accustomed myself to think aloud on this subject and to unravel a great many of my feelings regarding it. For that I owe you thanks, dear Madame. . . .

"None the less I am mortally wounded; every day I cry out a thousand confused complaints against the injustice of heaven. You will laugh at my pain; it is real, nevertheless; I am weak enough to be interested in public affairs, and it is impossible for me to consider the crowd of related events and terrestrial contingencies without dreaming of dominating them. It would be wiser in me to limit myself to seeing them in their eternal aspect. But in me wisdom is no more than the best of my desires. Won't you draw me out of these follies a little?

"CHARLES MAURRAS.

"Chemin du Paradis, at Martigue, Bouches-du-Rhône."

"DEAR MADAME:

"How am I to thank you for so kind, so generous, and so friendly a letter as the one you were good enough to write to me? I found it on my return to my hermitage from the banks of the Crau, and I re-read it as the ancient poets used to read the *consolations* they received occasionally from their best friends. You speak to me of a thousand things of which I think only rarely and which must be precious, since you are good enough to remind me of them. . . .

"And it is not life, at least not the course life takes, that causes me to be sad. I have never thought for longer than a quarter of an hour about what is called business. My unfortunate deafness has simply reduced me to frequenting only pleasant society, where there are to be found neither low jesters nor malicious jokers. I am not inactive, and if the proofs of my activity are not always to be seen, it is because hitherto I have scattered my energies widely. Every spectacle diverts me; I don't know anything that does not interest me, and I take disdainful people and specialists to be monsters. It seems to me that everything is worth the trouble of being looked at, and when I have embarked on this sort of reverie, life seems to me a ridiculously brief space in which to taste, understand, and love the great variety of objects that ap-

pear on every hand. I have not yet made my choice; I don't know that I shall be able to make it. And if I do feel myself a nihilist, it is not for want of sensing the abundance of the universe. I reproach life with only one thing, it is that life is mine; or, to put it better, I am annoyed with myself only for one reason, which is that I am only I.

"Will you try to forgive this interminable confession? I have the feeling that you provoked it somewhat, and that your kind and gracious pages manifested a surprise which I had to dissipate. You see to what lengths I have been driven. It is true that the weather today inclines one to meditation. It is raining. The houses and the river banks, that tremble in the haze of the heat, are marked today by a clearer line. The canals and the pools have that pale, soft tint of large green eyes deprived of radiance. . . ."

In a recent letter M. Maurras has told us how France, who signed his *Univers* articles "Gérôme," came to sign his own name, and how Mme. Arman de Caillavet, who sometimes wrote his articles, ended by doing them almost altogether.

"The Paris letter in the *Univers Illustré* was last signed 'Gérôme' on August 30, 1890. In the

issue of September 6 the pseudonym is replaced by the signature of Anatole France. For several years, it reappeared regularly every fortnight. I thought that the great success of *Thaïs* in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* was responsible for the change.

" 'You are mistaken,' Anatole France said to me one afternoon of the following winter: 'the obligation to use my own name was a punishment inflicted on me. Occasionally, I would write my 'Gérôme' rather hastily; I am given to absent-mindedness. One day, when I was quoting something, I found it easier to cut out my author than to copy him, and I had the ill luck to paste the quotation face downward, which made my article read absurdly. 'If that is what you do,' said the editor, 'hereafter you will sign your own name to the letters, M. France.' And I had to agree. I now sign, you see. And often the only trouble I take is the signing of my name.'

"The last words would be incomprehensible if I did not add that they were addressed to me in the upper room in the Avenue Hoche, two feet away from Mme. Arman's desk. She had probably written many of the 'Gérôme' articles, was then writing his 'Anatole France' letters, and finished by taking over altogether this fortnightly task.

"It was taken for granted, by every law, convention, and habit of their friendship, that she would

write this article without even being asked to do so. This was her department. A specific day was set aside for it, and unless I am mistaken, or unless it was afterward changed, that day was Saturday.

"Not only did Anatole France never hide this fact, but he would mention it jokingly to anybody at all. I do not see why I should refuse to divulge an open secret. The close, incessant collaboration of Mme. Arman de Caillavet was maintained on many other subjects and in connection with works of much greater significance.

"She had a passion for France's fame, and, except perhaps as touches his verse, the most penetrating, the most precise intuitive appreciation of his taste, his art, and his genius. It was an exemplary but very rare case, in my experience a unique case, of a vigorous personality, a first-rate soul and mind, content to identify itself with another personality. Only a woman, and a womanly woman, could have accomplished this difficult miracle, which still astounds us.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

In August, 1891, Mme. Arman made a tour with her son. They visited Austria, Hungary, Bohemia, the Tyrol, and the Engadine. She was "indefatigable and pitiless" when travelling. Except her

son, no one could maintain the pace she set so easily. France wrote to her from Paris:

"I am writing while in the midst of an interminable article on Théodore Reinach's *Mithridate Eupator,* which will bore everybody, but no one as much as me. I mention my article because the book is a substantial work. . . ."

"It is raining. It rains every day. During this evil weather, M. Arman is suffering from an inflammation that has ruined the appearance of his face, the more so as it shines mightily, not with a natural brilliance but because of the application of a soothing oil. However, he is thinking of a boat that is for sale, and he is happy. . . ."

When she was again at Capian, France wrote to announce his coming, and added:

"I learned yesterday from Alderman Villain, one of the contributors to the *Temps,* that in the archives of the hospital in the Avenue Victoria they have preserved the inventory of the furniture found at Mme. de Sablière's after her demise. It had all been sold, and the document shows the price brought by each piece. The prices, which Villain has shown me on his copy of the inventory, seem

to me very high. He is going to publish an extract of the inventory; that will enrich our publication."

Upon his return to Paris from the Gironde, he thanked her:

"Dear Madame:

"I am writing to you from Charavay's after having corrected my proofs and rummaged for books along the quays. I retain the happiest memories of Capian, and I beg my hostess to believe me very grateful. And my host also, if you will be good enough to tell him so.

"I spent a clear, hot night in the train. But the car was filled, and a very fat old gentleman slept on my shoulder. During this time, a judge from Poitiers (I gathered his situation from his conversation) was explaining to his neighbour that the *Temps* had a very distinguished contributor, A.F.

"Paris is a little cool. It will not be agreeable until you arrive.

"I shuddered to find fifty letters awaiting me on reaching home. But when I summoned up the courage to open them, I saw that nothing was lost, except for Zamora, who lost a 25,000-franc engagement because I did not send him back in time the certificate he had transmitted to me. Otherwise, everything is going well. I have no news of

Mlle. Cantel. As for Captain Marin, he is in a frightful state. He told my man, Virgil, that he had never been so upset in his life. My article is very bad. But you must take into account when you read it that it was written after a tossed and sleepless night. It is very cold here. Please tell M. Arman that the climate of Paris is almost as severe as that in the Gironde.

"Forgive me for having as yet done none of your errands, but I have had time only to write and correct my detestable copy. Tony Borel cabled this morning to ask for the Joan of Arc for his *Revue de Famille*. He confided to me that nothing was more troublesome than to edit a respectable magazine. I envy the editor of *Gil Blas*, said he. . . .

"I kiss your hands, dear Madame, and beg you to say the pleasantest things to your husband—from me.

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

In 1891 France was divorced. He had been living for some time on bad terms with his wife, or rather, in painful silence. He no longer spoke to her. "Seated facing her at table, he had a genius for not seeing her. And if he met her by chance in one of the rooms of their apartment, he gave this

poor woman the impression that she was invisible. He ignored her; he treated her as if she were a stranger and a nullity. In their home, in the midst of the innumerable cares of their joint existence, he never saw her, nor heard her, nor perceived anything of her. She suffered from existing as though she were nonexistent. . . . She had a dynastic pride." We quote from France's *Mannequin d'osier*. Madame France was a granddaughter of Guérin, the miniature painter of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette. "Her father," to quote again from the novel, "had strengthened this pride in her."

Mme. de Martel, who was a close friend of both husband and wife, was the recipient of their reciprocal confidences and complaints. She is our source of information concerning this troubled period in France's life. The incident of the "wicker-work woman" happened almost exactly as related in France's novel of this name. One day he met Leconte de Lisle in the street, shortly after their reconciliation.[5] He asked Leconte de Lisle to come home with him for a moment. Preceding Leconte de Lisle, he opened the door of his study and saw the silhouette of Mme. France, faithfully moulded in flexible reeds—the celebrated mannequin. He had ordered that this object be kept out of the room

[5] The quarrel between France and Leconte de Lisle is related by M. Louis Barthou in *Conferencia*, May 18, 1925.

reserved for his work and his reflections. "He had long been annoyed by this instrument that reminded him at once of a chicken coop and a certain idol made of cane that he used to see as a child in one of the engravings in an old history," says the *Mannequin d'osier*. He threw himself upon "the headless object" and crushed it furiously, "making it crackle in his fingers like the cartilage of so many ribs, threw it down, stamped on it, carried it groaning and mutilated to the window, and threw it into the courtyard" of the Pellier Riding School. He was living at the time in a small house belonging to his wife in the Rue Chalgrin. A stable-boy brought back the poor mannequin, "bandy-legged, crippled."

Another scene further poisoned their already strained relations. France had employed a workman to fix to the walls of his study a piece of Genoese velvet given him by Mme. Arman. This velvet had been left her from her earlier home. They had been unable to find space for it in the Avenue Hoche or at Capian, and Mme. Arman had begged France to "take it off her hands." Mme. France disliked the gift and objected to its presence in "her house." France, by wishing to disobey her injunction, made her very angry. When she saw the workman nailing up his velvet she ordered him down from his ladder. France ordered the

workman to stay and go on with his job. The workman obeyed him. Whereupon Mme. France left the room, locked them both in and went off with her key in her pocket to dine with Mme. de Martel at Neuilly. Mme. de Martel, horrified at the incident, urged her to return immediately and deliver her prisoners. When Mme. France reached the Rue Chalgrin she saw a crowd in the street, drawn by the cries of the passers-by who were being begged by the workman to come up and break down the door. As for France, he was calmly writing at his desk, and did not so much as raise his head when his wife came in.

"As to when France left the Rue Chalgrin," writes Mme. de Martel, "I think it was a year after the Genoese velvet affair. . . . Mme. France told me what happened. 'He was writing his article. I scolded him. He answered back. I ended by calling him ——.'[6] Then he got up from his desk. I thought he was going to leave the room, so I left. A moment later I heard the street door shut. I thought, 'He can't possibly have had time to dress.' I ran to the window, and saw him shutting the outer gate. He was still in his dressing-gown with his skull-cap on his head. The cords of his sash dragged in the street behind him. On a tray he was carrying his ink-well and the article he had been

[6] A word that France "considered gross, ill-bred, and vulgarly injurious." (*Mannequin d'osier.*)

writing. An hour later he sent some one from the Hôtel Carnot with a note asking for his linen." The note informed Mme. France that he would never return to the Rue Chalgrin.

It was at this time that Mme. Arman was saddened and disoriented by the death of her father, who had been the object of her frequent care for several years past. She was also more estranged from her son, now that he was out of the army and living in the Avenue Hoche, than when he had been at Versailles. The "life of a young man" was not well suited to maternal influence, and she felt this very keenly. Later, Gaston de Caillavet wrote of his mother's melancholy and the wrongs he imagined himself to have been guilty of:

"She was not very happy, my poor mother. There was in her a need of expansion which she was obliged for a long time to repress. Then, when I was old enough to understand a little, she wanted our intimacy and affection to go on incessantly. She never left me, and she made me something of an emanation of herself. You cannot imagine the care she took of me during my first years at school; she was part of everything, interested in everything, and she followed me as long and as closely as she could. But I grew up without seeing or understanding all I owed to her. Children one loves

too greatly are unconsciously devoid of gratitude. And my youth, my friendships, my life, separated me a little from her; we did not realize, perhaps, that we were both suffering from the separation. I was often unhappy without reason, puzzled by my distress, not knowing that I suffered through my solitude, lacking my confidante and my consoler. . . . My poor mother felt herself isolated, too."

It was for this reason that Mme. Arman de Caillavet was glad to welcome France more intimately than hitherto she had done, and France, henceforth without a home, came to lunch and dine daily in the Avenue Hoche. He would come in between noon and two o'clock, guided not by the hour but by his hunger. He never looked at his watch, which would have been useless, for he never wound it up.

Mme. Arman extended a warm welcome also to Suzanne France, a poor child tossed about between her estranged parents, and took her to Italy in 1900. Mme. de Martel tells us that after the divorce, France would bring Suzanne to lunch with her at Neuilly and leave her there to be picked up by Mme. France when she came to dinner. One day Mme. France neglected the Sunday dinner, and Suzanne was left to spend the night at Neuilly

without any attention from her parents. The next day, Mme. de Martel's son brought the child home to her mother. After France and his daughter quarreled, Mme. Arman, when she thought it just, never hesitated to take the girl's part against her father.

Beginning in the autum of 1891, France spent one or two months every year with Mme. Arman at Capian. He has written some charming pages in his *Vie littéraire* on these sojourns in the Gironde:

"This morning a great sun is drinking up the dew of the fields, gilding the vine leaves, and penetrating the ripened grapes with its subtle flames. The light air vibrates on the horizon. Seated at my desk, which I have moved over to the window, I can see, by bending a little, the grange where the farmhands are threshing the wheat. They do it carefully, while the beautiful light of the sun bathes and penetrates them. Harnessed to the threshing machine, two powerful horses, weary and patient, their heads in sacks, turn incessantly, making the wheels hum and the straps creak. A child is cracking a whip to excite them to work and to drive away the flies avid of their sweat. Men wearing the blue *béret* of the Pyrenees, brought from their mountains to the Gironde,

carry on their backs great sheaves which the women in wide straw hats, barefooted on the grey tarpaulin of the threshing-floor, feed to the threshing machine that hums like a hive. . . .

"While I blacken my paper with romantic images, the sun sinks and glides on the reddened horizon.

"Evening has come. The monotonous hum of the threshing machine is stilled. The tired farm-hands go by under my window, dragging their wooden shoes. I see their slow, tranquil shadows pass, lengthened immeasurably by the sunset. Their even pace betrays that peace at heart which comes only from assiduous work of the hands. They have earned their bread. Can I say as they can that I have done my day's work? . . .

"On this hillside, among the vines whose creepers lie twisted flat upon the burning earth, no new book has come to incite my lazy criticism to work."

"I have read once more, here among the vines, a book that was for me like the visit of a learned friend."

"As the morning was hot and still, I carried the welcome book into a little forest of oaks where I read under a tree while the birds sang. To read

thus is to read happily. On the grass, one never thinks of taking notes. One reads for pleasure, for amusement, and in innocence. One is disinterested, for there is nothing like the animated air of the woods to render us indifferent to ourselves and to dissolve our souls in things. The moving shadows trembling on the page and the hum of the insect flying between the page and the eye mingle with the author's thought a delightful impression of Nature and of life."

"And the old oak beneath which I was reading spoke in its turn and said to me: 'Read, read, in the shadow of my foliage.' . . ."

France loved the Gironde best during the wine-harvest season. He loved its animation and the beautiful purple of the vines. He became interested in the grape-picking and the crushing, and spent many hours watching the harvesters and talking with them. He asked them endless questions and listened to their replies with a courteous attention that was a little affected. He discoursed interminably to them. He always sought to make himself agreeable to the common people. He applied himself as whole-heartedly to this as to making himself disagreeable to fools in society. He loved also to chat with the local priest, whom he would interrogate minutely.

"I remember something told me a few years ago by the priest of a little parish situated in the Gironde between Cadillac and Langoiran," he writes in *La Vie littéraire*. This little parish was Capian. What he was innocently told by the priest was the story of the intrigues in the bishopric and the competition among those of the priest's colleagues who were lobbying for an episcopal throne. France put his stories into the mouths of Fathers Guitrel and Lantaigne, and the good priest was much vexed one day to see his tales in *L'Orme du Mail* and *Le Mannequin d'osier*.

Life at Capian was simple, but the cooking was excellent. Mme. Arman insisted upon this, and M. de Caillavet kept a watchful eye on it. This solicitude was unselfish in her, for she ate very little, in the fear of growing stout, but she wanted her guests to be well nourished; M. de Caillavet, who loved the pleasures of the table, was often tumultuously severe toward the chef. Therefore, the hour at which meals were to be served always led to storms, the chef declaring that punctuality was indispensable to a perfect dish. At the first sound of the luncheon bell, France would go quietly over toward a grove of elms with a book in his hand, saying invariably: "I am coming right back. Go on in to luncheon." From the elms he would go among the vines and stay there. At the second

bell, Mme. Arman would appear and say: "I am going to fetch him. Go on in to luncheon." She would not come back either, and in the distance one would see her bright sunshade moving among the vines. Repeated and angry chiming of the bell would follow loud shouts. In a moment, if there were other guests, they would go off one after another to bring back the incorrigible late-comers, who would move toward the house without haste, continuing calmly to chat. The troop of hungry people would escort them into the dining-room, where they would generally find M. de Caillavet finishing his luncheon with the declaration that it had been excellent. Mme. Arman would judge the eggs overdone, the fish detestable, and the meat burned. At each complaint her husband would shout mightily and jubilantly: "It was your fault." M. France would say conciliatingly that the luncheon was delicious; he would be perfectly right, for, knowing the daily, immutable rite of the household, the chef would prepare for successive services, and cook his dishes at lengthy intervals.

After luncheon came work. They worked in the drawing-room, where France had his writing-table, his armchair, his ink-well, and his quill pens; but he had no blotter. He was never to have one. There was something fatal about his lack of a blotter. Every time any one went to Bordeaux, the

word "blotter" came first on the list of errands and purchases. But it would have been useless to buy blotters, for never could the blotter reach France's table. It is to be presumed that Mme. Arman felt a personal antipathy for these wide pink or white sheets, and that she helped fatality secretly. Often, too, there was no paper. At such times it was collected from the various bedrooms. They even stooped to begging paper in the kitchen. When all the boxes of letter paper were emptied, and the pantry had exhausted its reams, France would resolve to write on the back of invitation cards and even on the margin of illustrated journals. Many pages of his draft manuscripts were scribbled on these haphazard scraps.

It was on purpose that the table in France's room was tiny and his chairs uncomfortable. Mme. Arman maintained that when he retired to work he would go to sleep. Therefore she insisted that he work in the drawing-room, where he would find everything he needed except the blotter. There, if he gave way to slumber, he would be drawn from it by indignant cries: "Sir, you are dozing!" "No, Madame, I am reflecting."

It was not until just before dinner that Mme. Arman would allow him to find relaxation in long strolls, for they were both good walkers and people

found it hard to follow them so far. They detested driving about in carriages.

Every week they would go to Bordeaux. They would leave in the morning, embarking from the pretty port of Langoiran, move easily down the Gironde River, tie up at the Quai de la Grave in Bordeaux, and lunch at the *Chapon fin*. Then they would make the round of the antique shops, or visit some of the old town-houses that were not yet stripped of their magnificent panels and carvings by gentlemen from Paris or New York, make a few purchases, take tea at Gazeaud's, the pastry shop of the *Intendance,* and, more often than not, miss the boat or the train they had planned to take home. This meant a late arrival at Capian, where, once they were home, they would discover that they had forgotten to make the indispensable purchase which had, more than anything else, sent them into the city. It would afford a pretext to go back to Bordeaux.

France always loved dogs. One after another, Riquet, Mitzi, and Kiki have been praised in his books. Kiki was the most rustic and the least well trained. He could never be made to understand that a certain green rug sown with roses was not a flowered lawn. Therefore, he used it as a lawn, even preferring it to those about the house. One day, as he stood against the long window barking

desperately to be allowed into the drawing-room, France got up and said: "Let us open it to him. He has been restraining himself so long!"

These three dogs spent part of their lives at France's feet, or couched behind him in his arm-chair, a position he considered "excellent for the small of the back." It was not excellent for the unfortunate animals, who, crammed with food and never exercised, already looked like cushions while they were still very young. However much France discoursed to them on the most subtle and varied topics, they continued to remain stupid. He did not love them the less for it. Mme. Arman wrote to her maid, Eugénie, after one of her departures: "I am very distressed by Kiki's sorrow. . . . M. France was greatly touched. . . . I am glad he has been consoled somewhat. He will not have long to complain. We shall be back soon. Have you read the article in the *Echo de Paris* on Monday in which he was mentioned?" It is doubtful whether Kiki felt the slightest sorrow at their departure. He knew no other pleasure than to eat, and no other pain than to be forced to accompany them on their long strolls, which meant real martyrdom for his obesity. When, on the futile pretext of reducing his weight, he was forced to go with them, he would resign himself to his fate at first; then, sitting down on his haunches, he would howl as if in

distress. As the poor animal was too heavy to carry, France in his exasperation would tie the corner of his handkerchief to his collar and drag him, wailing, through the dust. These little companions recur frequently in the correspondence of France with Mme. Arman:

"Your little dog is well and friendly. I think he is fond of Joséphine."

"Your little dog is of an exemplary gentleness."

"The little white dog slept on a cushion in my bedroom. He has an excellent disposition. He finds everything to his liking."

And a few years before France's death, when he was writing *Petit Pierre,* the memory of Mitzi inspired this beautiful page:

"Alas! life, that queen of metamorphoses, has left me like a child asking its nurse an unanswerable question. I have dragged a long chain of days without renouncing my search for the unknown land. I have hunted it on all my journeyings. How many times, as I wandered through the waving ocean of vines along the banks of the silvery

Gironde with my companion and friend, the yellow little dog Mitzi, how many times I have trembled as I turned into the new road, the unexplored path. You have seen me, Mitzi, at all the crossroads, at all the corners of the highway, at all the turnings in the forest paths, watching eagerly for the terrible apparition, formless and like unto oblivion, that would solace me a moment in the boredom of life. And you, my friend, my brother, were you not also hunting something that you never found? I could not divine all the secrets of your soul, but I have discovered in it too many likenesses to my own not to believe that it was restless and tormented. Like me, you sought in vain. Seek as one may, one finds only oneself. The world is for each of us that which we contain of it. Poor Mitzi, you had not, as I have, for the guidance of your search, a brain with innumerable convolutions, speech, scientific instruments, and those treasures of observation contained in books. The light in your eyes has died, and the world with it, that world of which you knew nothing. Oh, if your dear little shade could hear me, I should say to it: 'Soon my eyes also will shut for eternity, before I have learned much more than you about life and death. As for the unknown world I sought, I was very right, when I was a child, to think it close to me. The unknown world envelopes us, it is all that is outside

ourselves. And since we cannot escape from ourselves, we shall never attain it.' "

Among the memories of Capian which recur most often in France's correspondence and work is a certain little road where Mme. Arman loved to stroll. "Do you still go out toward the moon like a princess going to call on a neighbouring princess? But has not your little road been torn up?"

In another letter we read: ". . . Are the white grapes abundant, and is the moon on your little road?"

In *Le Lys rouge* he makes Thérèse Martin-Bellême say: "At Joinville I have my road, a flat road with the moon at the end. The moon is not there every night, but it comes back faithfully, full, red, familiar. It is a country neighbour, a lady of the vicinity. I go forward to meet her very seriously, out of courtesy and friendship."

When the season grew late it became necessary to leave Capian, the little old house among the vines. The melancholy that overcame France at the moment of departure is reflected in *La Vie littéraire:*

"The cold, tranquil rain that drops slowly from the grey sky raps at my window as if to call me. It makes only a slight sound, and yet the fall of each drop resounds sadly in my heart. While

I sit before the fire, my feet on the fender, drying the salubrious mud of the road and the furrows in the heat of the flaming vine-shoots, the monotonous rain holds my thought in a melancholy reverie, and I dream. We must leave. Autumn is shaking its damp veils over the woods. Last night the sonorous trees shivered at the first beating of its wings in the troubled sky, and now a quiet sadness has come from the west with the rain and the mist. All is silent. The yellowed leaves fall without a song in the paths; the birds and beasts are silent and resigned; only the rain is heard; this great silence weighs upon my lips and upon my thought. I should like to remain silent. I have only one idea, which is to leave. Oh, it is not the shadow, or the rain, or the cold that drives me forth! The country is still to my liking, even when it does not smile. I do not love only its joy. I love it because I love it. Are those whom we love less dear in their sadness? No, I am distressed to leave these woods and vines. It is in vain that I remind myself of the sweet warmth of friendly homes in Paris, the distinguished discourse of their hosts, and all the arts that adorn life there; I miss the grove of elms in which I strolled and read poetry, the little wood that sang in the lightest wind, the great oak in the field where the cows were pastured, the hollow willows on the banks of the brook,

the road through the vines at the end of which the moon rose; I miss the maternal cloak of leaves and the sky under which all our ills go so peacefully to sleep.

"Besides, I have always felt excessive bitterness at parting."

In 1895 M. de Caillavet bought a yacht called *Cymbeline*. France, who loved sailing, was enchanted; he sketched out many magnificent itineraries, and was somewhat disappointed when he was not invited on the first cruise. Other friends were asked, and he gave vent to an ill humour which shows in several of his letters. However, he was invited to spend a week on board the *Cymbeline* during the regatta at Cowes—one week only. Before and after this week the Caillavets cruised in English waters without France. He was angry with the importunate friends whom he accused of occasioning his exclusion from the party. He inquired affectionately of Mme. Arman, nevertheless, how she enjoyed life on board:

"Allow me to remind you that you promised to write immediately to tell me how you spent your first night on board. Do not forget me, for charity's sake. I am very unhappy over your absence."

After the Cowes week, which he enjoyed only

indifferently because of the people in the party whom he fancied hostile to himself, he resumed his correspondence:

"VERY DEAR MADAME:

"I am better this morning. I think, between ourselves, it is the effect of your letter.

"I am in truth overwhelmed with annoyances and irritated by a thousand horrid noises. Everything was going well, however, except for a fever that has deprived me of strength and sleep. *La Rôtisserie* is practically finished, at least as concerns the first draft. M. Jérôme Coignard is on his way to Lyons. But when I have finished outlining these scenes, I shall need books in order to verify an infinity of details. And I know less than ever when I shall be able to make use of my library. The mute workman has fixed several shelves into one corner of the room, but he is resting from the fatigue of this effort, and my imagination sees in the bookshelves a columbarium in which it places funeral urns, rather than a working library. I do not even hope for a curtain. Fortunately, I found yesterday at Charavay's a very useful collection for the publication of Julie's letters. But imagine the state of my poverty when I tell you that I have to go to the library to find a copy of *Le Lac* by Lamartine. Charavay has turned over to me sev-

eral of Charles's letters; he was an agreeable old man, affectionate, simple, ingenuous, and courageous. He had read the English novels and Voltaire's tales. Everybody has his worries; while Julie was thinking of Lamartine, Charles was suffering cruelly from gallstones. He wrote to his friend Morel de Vindé, who lived at Celle-Saint-Cloud: 'If there were a brook from the Institute to Celle, I should let myself drift down like a frog. But what would Mme. de Vindé say if she saw me come up on her lawn like Odysseus on the beach where Nausicaa was washing her linen? What enrages me is that people say to me: "One can see in your face that you are feeling marvellously well." I always want to answer them as the old woman answered Candide: "You wouldn't talk that way if you saw my behind." ' I quote from memory, the letter being at Charavay's. But I think that this incongruity heightened by literature will please you as a victory of the mind, good temper, and courage, won over the ills of life. I write to you, very dear Madame, in the noise of an abundant rain, clear as a mountain cascade. I don't know how I shall go about publishing these letters without you. Come back soon, Madame; it will only be humane of you to do so. You have said nothing about my *Temps* article which was called, I think, *At the Priory,* and contained a dialogue. It seems to me

the least poor thing I have done in a long time. I think the *Rôtisserie,* too, has passable pages, because of the Abbé Coignard, who has acquired a definite character. But you have not read it. And nothing exists that is unknown to the Sun.

"Come back to Paris, Madame. The beautiful rain that sends its cool, powerful clamour into my ears will lave the town and render it worthy to receive you. Ah, Madame, how vexed I am that you should be in London. With this letter, I am *myself* taking to the post office the card for Mlle. Massenet. Has M. Arman received my letter? Tell Gaston that I am really fond of him, and more so every day. And to you, Madame, I send my most tender respects.

"Anatole France."

"Dear Madame:

"I suppose you are no longer at Cowes, and since you are so unkind as to send me no news of yourself, I do not know where you are. Eugénie doubtless knows more than I do, and I am sending this letter to the Avenue Hoche. I hope that you will reply to it, that you will take pity on my state of loneliness and boredom. I have been at Saint-Thomas for a week, and in that time I have scarcely been out of my room, from which can be seen, as I have already told you, a crumbling wall covered

with blossoms. They are soapwort of a pink that is tender and wearied, like passionate women. I shall go on Sunday to Notre-Dame de Liesse, which will seem poor enough to you who are landing at flowered islands, in the mouths of rivers, and perhaps in magic grottos.

"Noël Charavay, who showers me with gifts (he gave me a great Louis XVI. portfolio of red morocco leather with lace tooling), has sent me the letters of Mme. Charles which I have already mentioned to you. Only your acquaintance with them is lacking to make them of interest to me. They are curious, and one might write two or three articles about them. But it will want many books to publish them. And in my weariness and my disgust with everything, I have not even brought away with me the ten or twelve books I had in the boat. It is true that I need other books to *illustrate* these letters. They are addressed to Baron Mounier. Lamartine is mentioned in one place. I copy out the passage for your entertainment: 'I have told M. de Lamartine of your friendly feeling toward him. He is greatly touched, and if he has not yet called to thank you, it is surely because he is ill. I hope very much that we may be able to do something for this interesting young man and his family. I should like to return some of the goodness I have had from him.' That is all. There is

also in the collection a letter from M. Charles dated the 4th Thermidor of the year XII (July 23, 1804), which is astonishing. You must read it. Addressed to M. de Vindé, it begins this way: 'At last, my dear fellow, I can give you positive news. On Thursday next I shall marry that excellent Julie. . . . Surely she is well worth all the trouble her possession has caused me.' Is not this amusing, and would not you like to know the rest? But how can one be interested in these old things when one is visiting Fingal's caves?

"I leave you to your brilliant pleasures and sink back into the shadow of my little wall. Pity me a little. Give me news of yourself and yours. And believe in the tender respect with which I kiss your hands.

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

"Sunday, Saint-Thomas near Corbeny (Aisne)."

While Mme. Arman was ending her cruise, France went to stay with the Comtesse de Martel at Lion-sur-Mer. Mme. de Martel has told us that some time earlier France, Barrès, and she decided to write a novel together in letter form, on the model of *La Croix de Berny*. A fourth hand was needed. M. Genest, a friend who like France spent several weeks each summer at Lion, was asked. He agreed on condition that the three

others give their word of honour that his collaboration would never leak out. Mme. de Martel was charged with the duty of offering the novel to Magnard, then chief editor of the *Figaro,* and obtaining a "big price." Without much hope, for the rate was then enormous, she asked for three francs a line (say, six cents a word). Magnard accepted so quickly that Mme. de Martel was stunned by this unexpected generosity. Magnard explained: "It is because the care with which you hide the name of the fourth collaborator confirms my original idea that it must be Renan!" Mme. de Martel did not contradict him, thus fortifying Magnard's conviction. She left, very sorry not to have insisted upon five francs a line.

Each of the four wrote his first letter, but they were never able to draw a second from France's nonchalance, and the scheme fell through.

After his sojourn at Lion, France went to Capian, and when he returned to Paris he resumed with Mme. Arman de Caillavet what he called his journal, from which we extract these lines:

"*October* 2, 1892. I have strength enough left to thank you for your gracious hospitality. I miss it all, even to the flies!"

"*October* 3, 1892. Vély has just told me of Renan's death. Something great, a part of ourselves, has crumbled in his death. . . . His death astounds us, and there is something of our own in it."

"*October.* I have received your friendly letter, which makes me regret that I could not attend the celebration your wine-harvesters arranged for you. But there are letters which, like the light of the stars, arrive only when what they represent has ceased to be. . . ."

"*October* 5, 1892. *La Rôtisserie* has to be done over again from the beginning. I am overwhelmed. My fever never leaves me."

"*October.* I miss the flies more and more. They have been replaced by scales. There are as many pianos in this street as leaves in a forest. But they make more noise."

"*October.* . . . D'Haussonville told him that to combat Zola would require a very literary name, and failing Bourget, he saw only me. I answered that there were others to be found, if they would look for them; that as for myself, I did not want to be pointed to as one who had prevented the election of a man of talent."

At this time the intimacy between Mme. Arman de Caillavet and Maurras grew closer, and she received numerous letters from him.

"Dear Madame:

". . . I have been in a very ridiculous state since yesterday as a result of a frightful coryza. I wanted so much to thank you for the gracious lines you were kind enough to send me, as well as for all the lines and the friendly words with which you have sustained and encouraged and stimulated me for more than a year past. These are the things that make life charming and precious. But why do you disguise yourself as a grandmother after that charming note of Thursday? It is rather I who should lament over my age. I feel myself to be really venerable, and if my grey hairs are as yet invisible, it is because they grow inwardly.

"Charles Maurras."

". . . How does it happen that your letters are like the pictures I love best? And what you say to me of the essential sadness of all joy! One needs to be drunk with sunlight to understand that thoroughly. I have cast off some of the debility you saw and sympathized with last month; I have begun to live again and have, little by little, substituted for the boredom of boredom the bore-

dom of action and distraction. Have I profited by the change? I do not think so.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

"I was nervous about another thing. I feared that my politico-social grievances would make you laugh at me. I see with pleasure that I was wrong. . . .

"I am full of confidence, not of course in myself, but in a certain star. It appears that it is visible in my palm. . . .

"The more I reflect, the clearer it becomes to me that I am good for nothing except to mill dreams or preach to men. But I am cut off from the career of preacher by fate. I fall back therefore on the rest, working meanwhile as best I can to preserve open eyes and alert senses in the midst of my reverie. But how difficult it is. . . .

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

Paul Hervieu also wrote very often to Mme. Arman de Caillavet. When he published *Peints par eux-mêmes* she was one of the first to congratulate him in terms which must have moved him, for he answered:

"MADAME:

"I am deeply touched by the very kind and thoughtful letter you did me the honour to write

on the subject of my new novel. You were good enough to divine and satisfy the anxiety with which I awaited your judgment, and it was infinitely good of you to have taken the trouble to reassure me so quickly, after having read my book so promptly, too.

"I shall come on Sunday next to offer my most grateful thanks in person, with a copy of the book you have so generously deigned to make me proud of. . . .

"Paul Hervieu."

This correspondence, and the commerce of long-established friendships, in themselves sufficient to fill and grace her existence, did not stand in the way of Mme. Arman de Caillavet's ardour for the discovery of fresh talent, nor of her kindness in encouraging it. The letters from Hughes Rebell, a young writer who was to die in 1905, and Georges Rodenbach, the Belgian poet, bear witness thereto:

"Madame:

". . . Because of the habit I have contracted of thinking in solitude, I feel a certain nervousness in the face of this game of throwing ideas back and forth and imprinting upon them, with each exchange, the mark of one's interest and detachment. There are many thoughts which I should greatly

like not to keep to myself, but I fear that in order to impart them to a variety of people a special form may be necessary, and that form I do not know how to choose.

"I confess that I am indifferent to the proselytes I may make among readers whose existence I ignore, but I am pained by any contradiction I observe in a human face, unless it be yours, or M. France's, for your judgments are enunciated with so much fascination that I cannot resist their grace. It is this very fact that explains why I am almost mute when you question me. In my case there is less timidity than pleasure. I am like a musician who does not know his part and is lost in the midst of the orchestra. He plays too quickly, or too slowly, or, as happens to me, he listens to the beautiful voices and forgets to sing himself.

"But please believe, Madame, that I shall try to cure myself of this annoying awkwardness, since you do me the honour to think that there may be some exchange between us, and that my mind is capable of giving back that which yours gives to it so kindly. . . .

"Hughes Rebell.

"P.S. This letter is addressed to the kindness that Mme. de Caillavet displays. It asks to be spared the spirit of mischief which loses its rights in the presence of a defenseless man."

"Dear Madame:

"Willingly and very joyfully, in anticipation of a delightful evening to be spent in the presence of your charming mind and in the home where art is in the air.

"Permit me to offer you this new poem by way of thanks for the many happy hours I already owe you.

"Respectfully yours,

"Georges Rodenbach."

The success of certain society novels irritated Mme. Arman, and she suffered a little from the disdain which a few elegant clubmen displayed toward France in her salon. She wanted to prove that he too was capable of relating a splendid story of Parisian adultery, and that he was now entirely conversant with the refinements of a circle into which she had introduced him. She urged him and harassed him, but for a long time he protested:

". . . I know nothing about society folk. I have never lived in the intimacy of these puppets; I should say silly things, and the puppets would make fun of me. . . . And they would be right! You understand . . . You understand. . . ." And he would raise his eyes, taking heaven to witness the absurdity of such an idea. Mme. de Martel

has told us that in his youth France repeated incessantly: "You understand. . . . You understand. . . ."

But Mme. Arman de Caillavet was tenacious, and she returned constantly to the charge. France eluded any promise: "We shall see," he would say. But by dint of speaking repeatedly of the novel, she ended by making him think about it. One day he began to give way: "If I should decide to do it, you would have to help me a great deal."

She promised to brush in the background of the picture and to give him all the necessary details. "And after all, don't you meet enough society people here to furnish all the necessary models?" And Mme. Arman would name over the men and women who might provide amusing outlines or furnish spicy details. Mme. B——, who had irritated them greatly one day when they had taken her to the Louvre, where "she discovered ceaselessly in the faces of the old painters likenesses to people she had known," [7] was condemned to be put into the novel and ridiculed.

Mme. Arman de Caillavet insisted with all her strength that one of the principal scenes of the novel should take place at the Opéra. She never went herself, and detested music, but she thought

[7] *Le Lys rouge.*

the Opéra a splendid setting. She added that the little recesses at the back of the boxes were very convenient for a declaration of passion, and recognized that music had a certain fitness as an accompaniment to tender avowals.

"You agree, don't you, that we should have a very passionate or very pathetic scene at the Opéra?"

"The Opéra, Madame? I never set foot in the place!"

She would shrug her shoulders and reply: "And the cenobies in the desert? Were you in them very often? Nevertheless, the scenes in *Thaïs* that take place there are considered passable. And did you by chance use to frequent Daphne's house at Corinth?"

She had the idea of introducing into the group of "puppets" a picturesque character who would stand out in violent contrast to them. This tempted France. They thought first of Verlaine. Many people believe they recognize Verlaine in Choulette. They are mistaken. The model for Choulette was an old eccentric, a royalist and militant Catholic, always lost in his dreams. He lived on the top floor of an unostentatious house of prostitution. He came down every morning himself to buy milk at the creamery and rolls at the bakery. One day, as he stood with his rolls and milk in his

doorway, he met France. Ignoring France's "Good morning" and continuing his mental image, he declared emphatically: "Pius IX. has embarked on a program in which I refuse to follow him." Then, with great dignity, he went into the brothel.

France used to speak with delight of the old nobleman and this encounter.

It was decided that the heroine would be named Thérèse Martin-Bellême and that she would live at Number 12, Quai de Billy, now the Avenue de Tokio. This splendid town house, which has since become the Polish Embassy, belonged to an aunt of Mme. Arman, and was known as Cedar House because there grew, in its little garden, one of the first cedars imported into France, planted there by Mme. de Lauraguais in 1760. It was decided also to go to Florence in order to situate there the most idyllic pages of the love episode. Mme. Arman left one Thursday in May, some weeks after Gaston's marriage, and took the young couple with her. France had left Paris three days earlier in order to visit a few Provençal towns on the way down.

In the morning, when the train reached Avignon, they saw France "in a long cloak" which "dragged along the platform, his hat on the back of his head, trailing an old travelling-bag behind him." When he recognized the travellers he smiled, got into

their compartment, drawing after him "his very old valise, which he pulled up by its two half-torn handles." He placed it "on the rack with scrupulous care, among the handsome bags in grey linen covers." He complimented Mme. Arman upon "the capes of her carmelite cloak, and was apparently full of witty gaiety and naïve pleasure" at the thought of the splendid journey they were to make together. Our quotations are from *Le Lys rouge* itself.

In Italy, France decided that the novel would be called *La Terre des Morts*. Mme. Arman did not like this title. During the journey she was obsessed by the idea of the novel, and spoke of it constantly. In the beautiful gardens, in the dark churches, in the great sad halls of the deserted palaces, she would say: "We must have a scene here." And as this went on in all the gardens, all the churches, and all the palaces, France grumbled: "Society novel in ten volumes."

Mme. Arman took notes tirelessly on bits of paper. She would stuff first her bag with them, and then France's pockets. "It would be a shame to lose this idea, or that suggestion," she would say. In the evening she would find it difficult to collect the papers and decipher the hieroglyphics—when they had not become lost.

One day, in the square of Santa Maria Novella,

they stopped before the shop of an old shoemaker: "A sparrow lacking one leg which had been replaced by a matchstick was hopping gaily about on the old man's head" (*Lys rouge*). The good fellow offered the ladies a wisp of sweet basil, saying: "For the perfume, ladies." By way of amusing her mother-in-law a little, Mme. Gaston de Caillavet exclaimed: "You must put this into the novel, too; the old man, the sparrow, and the pot of basil."

"Certainly, Mademoiselle," answered France; "and to punish you for your raillery, you will be made to play a horrid rôle in the novel."

He called her "Mademoiselle," maintaining that she looked like a little girl, and not at all like a woman. In the shops, the people would be of his opinion, and that would make her furious. France would crow with triumph at each "Mademoiselle": "You see, my child, we seem like accomplices in the kidnapping of a minor."

One day when a waiter serving tea made the same "painful" error, France said to him very solemnly: "You have made a mistake. Madame is married and has ten children." Then turning to her, he asked the smiling young woman if she was satisfied with him. On another day, as she was going out to post some letters she had just written, her mother-in-law called to her from the street, where

they had been waiting for her. In her haste to join her companions, Mme. Gaston de Caillavet forgot to leave her letters to be posted at the hotel. At the corner of the church of Or San Michele and a narrow little street facing Donatello's San Marco, she finally found a letter-box where she posted her correspondence. France said to Gaston: "If I were you, Gaston, I should be jealous. Why did not this young woman give her letters to the hotel porter? It is mysterious and disturbing." And he began to tease the young couple and to discourse upon jealousy. In the *Lys rouge,* the letter-box at Or San Michele serves to arouse Dechartre's first suspicions.

Every day at ten o'clock they went out. A letter from Mme. Gaston de Caillavet to her father shows the pace Mme. Arman set for her little troupe:

"We have to do the museums, the palaces, the churches, the streets, the shops, and the monuments ten hours every day, thanks to the unconquerable ardour and the iron health of my dear mother-in-law. I am enchanted to have M. France as our travelling companion. Since he is much more delicate than I am, he insists upon certain concessions and upon meals at fixed hours. Thanks to him, I may still hope to return in good health. We toured Genoa and Pisa down to the most minute details. Our charming but pitiless mother has not permitted

us to pass over a single thing of beauty. Don't worry about me; I am not tired. M. France is the only one to complain, and he complains very freely. Still, he is charming. His grievances, his admirations, and his heated arguments with my mother-in-law are very diverting. She is delightful to me; she looks after me as if I were a little girl of six. I appreciate it greatly, and I am glad of it; for with her prodigious health, her strength, and her energy while travelling, I should otherwise never be able to follow her. M. France, who is writing beside me, asks me to send you his friendly greetings and to tell you that 'the dear Madame and child (which is my nickname) is the joy of our trip.' My modesty suffers a little in transmitting this message; a little, but not too much."

France insisting upon fixed hours for meals! But when travelling, Mme. Arman often forgot to lunch.

The following summer, while M. and Mme. Arman de Caillavet were cruising in the *Cymbeline,* France was in Paris waiting to go to Mme. de Martel's at Lion-sur-Mer. Mme. Arman must have criticized the tale he published in the *Echo de*

Paris of July 26, entitled *Guido Cavalcanti,* for he wrote:

"Dear Madame:

"I thank you for your gracious letter which has made my solitude more endurable. I learn that you are drinking to the very lees the delights of the inimitable life into which your husband has drawn you. Oh, M. Arman! Oh, race of Mark Antony seeking pleasures in action! I see clearly that my Guido is obscure. But it is not for lack of work, for the second part, which seems to you slovenly, cost me three days of labour. Well, we shall try to throw some light upon these ladies whom you cannot distinguish very well because I was unable to show them to you. My idea (I had one) was after all very simple. Guido found happiness neither in dreams (one woman) nor in action (two women). He found repose in death (one woman), which he did not fear because he was an atheist. It is a pity; I took pleasure in telling this story, and I see that I should not believe that the pleasure I take is the pleasure I give. The worst that has happened is that I have received the page proofs of *Les Opinions de Jérôme Coignard* and that it is forty pages short. You hear, dear Madame; I must find forty pages to make a volume less thin, less empty, less *hollow* even, as they say in my publisher's of-

fice. I shall get ten by reshaping a Saint Abraham which appeared in *La Vie littéraire*. But I do not know how to go about doing the other thirty. I am much annoyed, and I am equally upset by the quantity of proofs of *Jeanne d'Arc* that are descending upon me. I am sinking into these troubles while you, Madame, are living the *inimitable* life.

"I leave for Lion not tomorrow, Saturday, as had been planned, but Sunday. Mme. de Martel has delayed her departure and so put off mine. The Aubert affair was settled as I explained to you. But I shall have something to pay. Moreover, I am a little ill, very sad, and in very bad humour. I hope to see you at Antwerp. I send friendly greetings to your captain, and I kiss your hands with respectful tenderness.

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

At the Opéra they were preparing to put on *Thaïs*. Louis de Grammont had written a libretto from the book, and Massenet had composed the music. Both begged France to come and advise them, but he was not curious about their results. The settings and the casting of the rôles interested him more, and he wrote to Mme. Arman:

"Yesterday, I went to see the models of three settings which Jambon has painted for *Thaïs*. The

Albin monastery is very pretty in taste and colour. But the Thebaid is nothing more than a group of cocoa palms, a dream of a caravan in the desert, a signboard for Algerian merchants. S—— has asked that Mlle. Beppa be given the rôle of the principal mime. Little C——, who is more modest, has asked me to make a friend he has in the ballet a 'third little jackal.' "

On the evening of his arrival at Lion, France scribbled this little note:

"Dear Madame:

"I too am a Cimmerian; I too live on the shore of the ocean. But I do not sail. Unlike you, I do not discover new shores and new traits in banker friends. I lock myself into a chalet known as the Farandole. It is there you must write to me at Lion-sur-Mer.

"I left this morning with a railway pass I got through the *Echo de Paris;* I tell you this in order to gain your husband's esteem.

"Mlle. Cantel and Maurras were at the station to meet me, brought there by no other revelation of my departure than the second sight that affection gives. My concierge, Mme. Poirier, hardly guided their faithful instinct at all. As for Mme. de Martel, she is not due until Monday morning.

"You will find in Tuesday's *Echo* the Buffalmacco extracted from your translations. I have brought *La Terre des Morts* with me in a mountain of proofs and notes. Jeantet and Ferroud allow me no rest. I am like Phædra, who did not know where to begin. It is true that if she had been able, she would have known. Please convey my friendly greetings to the captain, dear Madame, and believe me devotedly and respectfully your friend,

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

Mlle. Cantel was France's secretary before Mme. Arman de Caillavet rendered her services superfluous. One day, when she and France were carrying off a load of books in a hack, the bottom gave way under their weight, and the books were scattered over the Place de la Concorde. The astonished passers-by saw Anatole France, bare-headed and wild-eyed, picking up his books at the risk of being run over by the busy traffic on the square.

Mme. de Martel lived at Lion, in the Chalet Vernet, which was too small for the entertainment of house guests. She lodged them at the Farandole, where France occupied the "fly chamber." Flies abounded there, but, says Mme. de Martel in one of her letters, "France was easy-going, and declared they kept him company."

He wrote to Mme. Arman:

"My room is very nice, but it is not so good as the workroom in the Avenue Hoche. . . ."

"When I go down into the street, I see between the walls a little bit of the sea, waving like a handkerchief . . ."

When Mme. Arman de Caillavet was not there to urge him on, work bored him. He complains, moans, and groans in all his letters to her:

". . . I am overwhelmed with work and a little nervous about my lack of speed."

" . . . I become stupid when I am not with you."

" . . . I work eight hours a day here without achieving anything worth while. I am dumbfounded."

"After all, since I work eight or nine hours a day, I may be pitied but not blamed. . . ."

None of this disaffection remained after he left his desk. In a letter from Mme. de Martel we read the following:

"France was delightful, satisfied with everything, good humoured, equable, and agreeable. He

had reason to like it at our place, for he lived in no constraint, and he dined in his tasselled shirt and slippers. As we all did the same, he was no exception; he lived at his ease, and he enjoyed that. Often he would take a stroll toward six o'clock. The children would follow him, attracting other children, who would join in the procession. . . . We dined at eight o'clock, although nearly all the other bathers dined at seven-thirty and even at seven. At eight-thirty France would still be out, and the perturbed parents would mobilize all their servants and send them forth. Toward nine, France would arrive, smiling and content, followed by his flock."

He loved sea bathing, but as he did not know how to swim and was very careless, it was sometimes hard to keep him from drowning himself. Mme. de Martel's children always went with him. The boys remained near him in a canoe. They saved him several times from being drowned.

One day, as they were prawn-fishing, the drawers of his bathing-suit split, and he had to go back to the villa, in sight of the bathers, with a little basket held over the offending garment.

He never wrote to Mme. Arman of these distractions. It is probable that she hectored him about

his work, for in all of his letters France gives her an exact account of the results of his daily labour.

"Dear Madame:

"Forgive me for writing letters which are, as you say, insignificant, insipid, and devoid of anecdotes. But I am working hard enough to become entirely stupid.

"Since arriving at Lion I have corrected, or rather written, a chapter of *Jeanne d'Arc*. I have written forty pages of the following chapter, and done a tale, *Lucifer,* for the *Echo*. I have still to do *Cléopâtre,* my unfortunate *Abbé Coignard,* and the rest of the interminable Maid. I should like to get into the *Terre des Morts,* and I am very dejected. Last night, while a balloon was sent up for Suzanne's birthday, I saw a fringe of livid flames on the waves and the sky streaked with shooting stars. It was very beautiful. But I suppose you must see even better things, since you know better than I do how to see, and you are sailing. Poor Gyp [the Comtesse de Martel] is as ever filled with gay courage and simple kindness. But Magnard has refused her novel on the pretext that H—— is too patently recognizable in it. I think this has upset her domestic plans, although without shaking her unalterable heart. She is very good, this poor little woman. M. Genest, in a rheumatic state, has gone

to visit a cousin who is ill. And this is all my news. Send me yours, which will be so much more interesting. My friendly greetings to the chief of the *Cymbeline,* and to you also, Madame, my tender and affectionate greetings.

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

"DEAR MADAME:

"You no longer write to me. And it is very bad of you to forget me in my exile. We have had pleasures here that have not intoxicated me—the annual Lion celebration. They threw confetti and let off fireworks on the shore of the 'sea-with-the-multitudinous-sounds.' Mme. Y—— shone brilliantly. She is the wife of M. Y——, who has a seven-ton boat. Does M. Arman know him? Mme. Y—— has a pretty figure and a poor complexion, and is the queen of Caen. But the mayor of X——, a certain M. de Z——, has compromised her a little. One never sees her. No one returns her confetti. But she invites young people to her house, and they go there. They go back again. She has not a pretty mouth, but one sees nothing except her smile. She is not a person of distinction, and no one would wish her to be distinguished. She is very passable, physically. I have not had the honour to be presented to her. We are not prudish at the Chalet Vernet, but we

do not see her. We see the wife of General de B——, and M. de P——, who are exceedingly proper. But I do not see them. I am indoors all day at the Farandole, which is tranquil despite its dancing name. I have finished a chapter of *Jeanne d'Arc*. I have almost finished Ferroud's preface. Give me news of yourself, Madame. I kiss your hands with tender respect.

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

"DEAR MADAME:

"Are you still at Havre? I am at Lion, and I am not very gay here. But my work is going more quickly than your sorrowful predictions allowed. I have sent to Calmann-Lévy this very morning *Les Opinions de Coignard*, corrected and augmented by the forty pages the book lacked. This makes, in less than two weeks:

"1. A chapter of *Jeanne d'Arc* rewritten and a new one written (seventy pages).

"2. A tale, *Lucifer*.

"3. A preface, *Cléopâtre*.

"4. Two chapters of *Coignard* (forty pages).

"After this you will perhaps judge that I am idling my time away, for there is a great diversity in human opinions.

"I forgot to tell you that Genest has lost his cousin Picart, the solicitor. We do not know if

there was an accident or a suicide. You may have read in the *Figaro* that M. Picart was killed while unloading his revolver. That is all I know. Mme. de Martel is really an excellent and very agreeable woman. But she has to dinner very often certain Norman squireens who bore me: M. de Z——, the friend of Mme. Y——, M. de P——, and Mme. de P——, *née* Bittermann, and M. de Malfilâtre. Your husband must know this last man, for he has a boat. I like him better than the others, because he is a rustic and a sailor.

"I don't know what to do now for the *Echo;* I am laborious but sterile. . . ."

These dinners, whose participants he derides, were fertile in comic incidents.

One evening when he had promised to dress for dinner, he forgot both his promise and the dinner. He had to be sent for at the Farandole after the guests had already been present for some time. When he finally appeared, there was general consternation: he was still wearing a sack suit, a flannel shirt, and tan shoes. He had even forgotten to wash his hands. Mme. de Martel has given us some details of this misadventure:

"It was for Chevalier R—— (he who used to say: '*J'ai* un *bête qui s'est assis sur* mon *tête pour*

se gratter.' He meant a fly) that I gave the dinner at which France wore one blue and one red sock and an unbuttoned shoe over the red sock! . . . M. Malfilâtre was the owner of a pretty boat, the *Sorcelle;* a kindly man, fond of good living, dependable, and entirely rustic and 'primitive.' He once said to France, who was telling him laboriously a long story which he was drawing out to its full length: 'I say, if you're telling that to me, telegraph it, telegraph it!' "

France was very fond of Mme. de Martel, and his affection for her appears in almost all the letters he wrote from Lion to Mme. Arman de Caillavet:

"Mme. de Martel is a dear person. I see her only at table; the rest of the time she manifests herself in the care and thoughtfulness about me. . . .

"Yesterday, I met her in the village, holding by the hand two little beggars for whom she was going to buy clothes. She feeds all the stray dogs. She is a dear person."

When Mme. de Martel was not at work—and "Gyp" [8] worked very hard—she was either bathing or fishing. She lived in a bathing-suit. She had

[8] France says of Gyp in *La Vie littéraire,* second series: "The pseudonym of 'Gyp' conceals a gracious woman, the great-granddaughter of Mirabeau-Tonneau, whose quick, independent, and biting wit she has inherited."

six such suits, and her children would maintain that they never had time to dry.

As France had complained in all of his letters about the forty pages still necessary to complete the *Opinions de M. Jérôme Coignard,* and had written to Mme. Arman: "I am not sending you any proofs because all correction is useless until I have been able to find the forty pages that are lacking," Mme. Arman determined to send him some of her own composition.

"Dear Madame:

"I received yesterday the letter in which you tell me that you have determined to write a few pages to complete our poor abbé. Yesterday I finished the addenda and sent the package to Calmann-Lévy. I shall be very sorry if, as I fear, you have gone to needless trouble. In any case, I am very grateful to you. I have just finished a Buffalmacco for the *Echo* that follows your translations very closely.

"I have time only to put it into the post with this letter. . . ."

On the same day, France having received the promised pages, he sent his thanks:

"Dear Madame:

"This morning came your pretty tale of the

abbot and the actress. If we cannot fit it into the completed book, we can at least make a story of it for a collection of tales. It must not go unused; it is altogether pretty and moving and sad. I have also received, with M. Arman's autograph inscription, the breviary of the precious blood, and the photograph of the reliquary. The reliquary is in a pretty Renaissance style. As for the book, its rusticity is naïve. I thank you for having sent it.

"There is a M. Malfilâtre here who has invited me to sail with him in the *Fauvette*. I had much rather sail on board the *Cymbeline*. I also meet on the strand—where I go very little—a Mme. de Brie, who is the wife of a general. She is rather agreeable and not a fool, although she bothers with priests and fortune-tellers. But she is well into the age of piety. Do you know her? If I have the strength—for I am very tired—I shall begin *La Terre des Morts* today. I spent the morning putting my notes in shape. But I feel keenly that there is a society part in this novel that I shall be incapable of writing. . . ."

"Dear Madame:

"I have your letter from Havre. I know now that you will be passing through Paris toward the end of the week. It happens that I must be in Paris myself before the end of the month. If it

were possible to make our sojourns there coincide, I should be very happy."

He began "the novel," and several days later he wrote in a discouraged tone: "I have done six pages of *La Terre des Morts* in three days. At this rate the novel will be finished in three years." Nevertheless, *Le Lys rouge,* as it was now called, was published at the beginning of the following year. It created a great stir among France's admirers and Mme. Arman's friends. We find an echo thereof in many letters, among which we choose those of M. Charles Maurras.

"I hasten to thank you for your kindness. This is the real reason for my letter. Please believe that I appreciate it more than ever today. I am not such a barbarian as to let a *first* chapter of M. France exist without procuring it somehow or other, and (if I may display this bit of vulgar pride) I was very proud to have already read the beginning of *Le Lys rouge* when I received the proof-sheets you were so extremely kind as to send me, and which I nevertheless looked through with great pleasure; first, because they came from you, dear Madame, and also (forgive me!) because of X——'s notes. . . . X—— is extraordinary. He is a god. And yet *Le Lys rouge* is really admirable.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

"Dear Madame:

"Do not be annoyed if I reply immediately to the beautiful and gracious letter I received yesterday. I want to tell you instantly what I have just learned this morning. Lévy has accepted my book; more than that, he has accepted it with good grace, and I am very glad. I breathe freely now; I feel myself in a way to please you a little, since you wish me happiness and triumph. I think that my name will triumph at least in the *Revue de Paris,* since Lévy has expressed the *desire* to publish one of my myths in it. But you must allow me to tell you how grateful (and astonished, too, a little) I am for the lively interest you are good enough to take in the poor human and literary future that lies before me. I do not dare tell you how touched I am by it. . . . I have just finished *Le Lys rouge* and am still deeply stirred after reading it. I shall not risk another attempt to make my feeling clear, after all the comments I have already voiced to you about this *masterpiece.* I have never read anything in the world so voluptuous as the sixth part, nor, since Racine, anything so gripping, so human, as the last. The final scene is one of perfect beauty, and its beauty is alive! There you have the word that expresses my surprise, and I cannot get over it. I do not believe anybody has hitherto expressed

with so much strength and truth and ardour the sacred tears of life.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

"I cannot understand the sort of discouragement with which M. France spoke to us of this beautiful book. He has never written anything so warm. . . .

"I should be very glad to know if he is well and has rid himself of that melancholy mood in which he was unable to see his beautiful lily clearly.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

Neither France nor Mme. Arman had any premonition of the enormous success of *Le Lys rouge*. Envious people had instilled doubt into them. Mme. Arman was sensitive to the slightest criticism of the "beautiful book," because France had put much of herself into it. Observing her and listening to her, France had sketched the character of his heroine, whom he had endowed with certain of Mme. Arman's qualities: her proud indifference toward prejudices and conventions; her straightforwardness; the hidden passion in her soul; and her bold intelligence, which was wide and universal. In the setting in which Mme. Arman lived, France found the elements he used to compose a background for Thérèse Martin-Bellême. He

described her gowns and her jewels, even to the diamond arrow Mme. Arman then wore in her hair and which, sixteen years later, fell into her soup at a dinner given by the Duchesse de C——. It was in the heat of a conversation with Princess Bibesco that this accident occurred.[9]

If "Thérèse gives continual expression to delicate, ingenious, and profound thoughts," as Jules Lemaître wrote in his review of *Le Lys rouge* in 1894, these thoughts are not those of France, but Mme. Arman's. It was she who had, in Lemaître's words, "a liberal and philosophical mind." As Sainte-Beuve wrote of Mme. du Deffand: "She was the person who least often asked her neighbour what one was to think." The sentence France puts into Thérèse's mouth: "We do not know what to do with this short life, and still you ask for another and an eternal one," is something France had often heard Mme. Arman say. M. Nicolas Ségur says of her in his *Conversations avec Anatole France:* "Her intelligence was one of alertness, common sense, and energy. . . . She was not the kind of person one knew right off, and one was liable to gain a false impression on first meeting her. The excellence of her character became apparent only as one knew her better. It was then that one saw how cordial and generous she was. Her judg-

[9] Princess Bibesco, *Une Visite à la Bechellerie.*

ment and perspicacity were great, and she saw clearly to the bottom of worldly hypocrisy. She guessed herself to be surrounded by jealousy and spitefulness, and remained upon the defensive; her only revenge against malice consisted in derision." She was utterly devoid of snobbishness, and as she was herself timid and very sensitive, she was always more friendly to people in modest circumstances than to others. These are qualities with which France endowed Thérèse Martin-Bellême.

It was at this period that France grew displeased with his apartment in the Rue Sontay and desired to buy a house in the Villa Saïd.[10] Unable as usual to make up his mind, he wanted the advice of his friends, including that of M. Arman de Caillavet. But it was not always an easy matter to ask questions of M. de Caillavet.

LION.

"When I went yesterday to say good morning to your husband, I found myself in the presence of a meteoric and natural force, a magnificent stir of things, an astounding phenomenon, a troubled sea, but not at all a friend of whom one might request a little advice about business. I did not speak to him

10 The name given to a group of detached houses situated within a private gate, adjacent to the Bois de Boulogne.—*Translator's note.*

of the little house I wanted to buy. How can one speak of buying a house to foaming Poseidon? Yesterday morning, M. Arman was Poseidon. He was Neptune, Neptune irritated by the stupid and impious crime of some obscure Breton scribe who had forgotten an *l*. I asked him where he was planning to cruise. But he was the waves, the spray, the glaucous immensity, the ocean; and this abyss filled with tempests, with sea-monsters, with white Nereids, was growling in defeat, vanquished, spellbound by a fault of spelling, by a missing letter. Mighty indeed is the power of old Cadmus' alphabet. The sea is vast. Necessity governs the world. And that is why you will attend regattas, Madame.

"If the elements should die down, and if M. Arman is transformed into something slightly human, will you not please ask him what he thinks of my plan of buying a little house?

"I am writing you in the cold, the rain, and the wind. Lion is less ugly so; it is frightful and desolate, and an air of misery beautifies the bathers a little when the wind drives them like guilty souls into the shadow beneath my window. They no longer laugh. Their misery is a kind of nobility. And life is very easily borne in my little room, with paper, pens, and the memory of you, Madame. I am waiting for the papers Neptune is to send me (by post, poor Neptune!) to go to Caen, where the

formalities are to be settled. Keep me informed, Madame, of your plans, and believe me your deeply humble friend,

"ANATOLE FRANCE."

Tuesday morning.

"The gifts came yesterday and were greatly appreciated. The effect of the tassels is really sumptuous and of Oriental richness. You were right, Madame, it was Oriental. As for the knots made by Eugénie's hands, Mme. de Martel admired them much and at great length."

The papers M. de Caillavet sent to France were documents necessary to the nationalization in France of an English yacht which M. de Caillavet had bought to replace the *Cymbeline*. The gifts France mentions were those he brought to Mme. de Martel in gratitude for her warm hospitality. Eugénie, Mme. Arman's personal maid, had ornamented them.

France was greatly preoccupied with the purchase of the house, and perturbed by it. He had begun by negotiating the affair badly, "too quickly and without cleverness." He was afraid he would be exploited, and he sought the advice of an architect and a notary versed in such matters. The price asked was 70,000 francs. "I should have had it for

60,000 if my intelligence were only a little above the average," he wrote.

When summer came, France went back for the last time to spend a month at Lion. "La Farandole" was not free that year, and Mme. de Martel housed her guests in another chalet called "Le Presbytère." Mme. de Martel writes: "The window France has described was in this house. He would call out to Genest through this window and read his finished pages to him . . . and then he would rewrite them! This was how I learned with what difficulty he worked."

France was greatly preoccupied with the purreferences to the difficulties he encountered in the purchase of his house. Mme. Arman smoothed them away, for she was equally clever in sweeping aside vulgar cares from the master's mind and in profiting by the serenity she brought to him, both for his own work and for that of her young friends. It was thus that she obtained from France a preface in verse for M. Maurras' *Le Chemin du Paradis.*

"Dear Madame:

"I must send you too my thanks for the marvellous and unexpected wreath M. France has placed on my book, and thus on my brow. Do not make too much fun of me when I tell you that I feel ex-

actly like a victorious athlete; I do not recall the slightest victory, but the poet's praises ring in my ears. And do I not owe this to you? You must have put to sleep all our friend's thoughts in such fashion that he remembered nothing but the great friendship with which he honours me. I am going to ask Lévy to have this dedication autographed. Everything about the beautiful page which came this morning is dear and sacred to me.

"Are you not coming back? When? The autumn days of Paris are so beautiful in their grace that I know you will like them. I have looked in vain in *la Gazette* for the name of X——'s fiancée. But the immediate marriage of Z—— is essential. I see him, too, marching environed with nuptial flutes, Virtue and Reason opening a path for him and guiding him to the temple of the Oratory.

"Forgive me these malicious words. . . .

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

It was not only gratitude that prompted M. Maurras to write such beautiful letters to Mme. Arman de Caillavet. For a long time past, he had enjoyed communicating his impressions to her and exchanging ideas with her.

"DEAR MADAME:

"Do you remember your letter from Tuscany

two years ago? In any case, you will probably recall having described to me orally more than once the enchantment of Florence. I am on the point of leaving Florence this very day, but before leaving the city of the Flower, I want to thank you for your words, for your letter, for all you have said and written to me about these charming places, since it is through you that I conceived the desire to know them. . . .

"I am writing to you from a little café near the Signory while a guitar-player and a flute-player are producing sounds I judge to be agreeable, for I am so close to their music, its sound is so clear, and the air is so pure, that I do not lose a note of it. But is there anything that is not agreeable here? Not to compare them with my incomparable stay in Greece, the seven days and nights I have lived in Florence contained nothing that would not hold me here. There are few men more ignorant of history than I am, but nobody, I believe, is more sensitive to history made living, made flesh, given material form in a landscape or a monument. This is a pleasure with which I am now intoxicated. And then, and in the first place, and above all, what beautiful things! But I am sorry almost to death that I have had only a glimpse of them.

"Do you know, dear Madame, that in Florence you hear constantly the tinkle of Miss Bell's con-

versation, as in *Le Lys rouge?* I beg you to tell this to M. France, so that he may no longer become incredulous, ironical, or vexed when people speak to him of his fame. The countryside is full of him; I noticed it last evening at sunset when I went to say good-bye to San Miniato. The cypresses know him and have spoken to me of his books and of my native land.

"Charles Maurras."

Martigues.

"Dear Madame:

"Neither Provence nor anything else has charms for me at present. I think of nothing except returning as quickly as possible to Paris, where I shall taste new forms of boredom, impatience, and futile exaltation. To desire is very vain, but to possess is even more vain than to desire, while to lose seems to me sadder than to possess even a vanity. I do not know if I desire, if I possess, or if I lose. I know nothing save that there are beautiful moments and that they fly. All have not flown, perhaps, but the fear is equivalent to the ill, and I am afraid. . . . I was born discontented, restless, and yet reasonable (or desirous to put a little reason into my life). This is the source of my ridiculous mood today. You are very right to advise 'little fledgelings' (but

I am already an old man) to suffer only as much as is necessary to ennoble their pleasure.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

"I have no strength left. Let me come to see you tomorrow or the day after, at an hour when you will be alone. I shall say nothing either rare or new to you, but I will beg you not to interpret my silence as a mark of negligence or oblivion. . . .

"I need your forgiveness, for the most beautiful stories in the world cannot take away the fact that I have neglected to answer a letter from you, a letter that was charming and that brought me the murmur of summer and autumn over seas I had crossed in the spring.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

This correspondence continued until the Dreyfus affair came to separate so many friends and disrupt so many salons. M. Maurras has borne witness thereto in recent letters to the writer.

"Mme. Arman de Caillavet honoured me with her friendship during many years. I received frequent letters from her, and I am sure to have preserved a number of these generous and lively notes from a mind so clear, so sharp, so passionate even under its irony. . . . Perhaps I shall be able to find some of these precious pages. . . .

"Do not hesitate, Madame, to give to the public the letters she wrote to Gaston. They will undoubtedly display a new aspect of that superior intelligence, served by a flaming soul. The memory I personally retain is connected with her incomparable worship of the genius and particularly the fame of our illustrious friend. The contrast between her intense and vibrant will and the nonchalant humour of our good master used to fill me with surprise and admiration. . . .

"You must not allow this glorious past to die.

"CHARLES MAURRAS."

CHAPTER III

(1896 to 1910)

TRAVELS AND PLAYS—"AU PETIT BONHEUR"—ACADEMY ELECTIONS—THE COMTESSE DE NOAILLES; JACQUES COULANGHEON—THE SUMMIT OF FRANCE'S FAME—FRANCE IN ARGENTINA—THE DEATH OF MME. ARMAN DE CAILLAVET

In 1896 France was elected a member of the French Academy. From the numerous letters which Mme. Arman de Caillavet received on this occasion, the following note written by M. Georges de Porto-Riche has been selected for quotation as typical of the way in which this success was greeted by her friends.

23 January, 1896.

"Allow me to share in your happiness, Madame. I know how much you admire France and how long and active has been your propaganda in his favour. His triumph is in a measure your own.

"Faithfully and respectfully yours,

"G. DE PORTO-RICHE."

Although France had written in *Les Opinions de Jérôme Coignard:* "Happy is the man who knows that it is just as vain to be an Academician as not to be one," nevertheless, he was exceedingly pleased by his election. However much he might make mock of honours, at bottom he loved them. In recognition of what his friend had accomplished for him, he gave her the manuscript of his inaugural address to the Academy, with this inscription: "To Mme. Arman de Caillavet, in fervent piety."

From the time she first owned a yacht, Mme. Arman began to love sea voyages. Hitherto, she had sailed only along the Breton coast of France, and in Dutch and English waters. Her passion for Greece and Italy now inspired long annual cruises in the Mediterranean. During 1896 she visited Corsica, Sardinia, Sicily, and the west coast of Italy in her yacht, *Mélusine*. Her son Gaston accompanied her, as well as France, and Maurice Spronck.

ON BOARD THE "MELUSINE"
IN THE HARBOUR OF AJACCIO

". . . We shall go ashore in a few minutes to make a Napoleonic pilgrimage, and I really feel true emotion, as though I were about to gaze upon the source of a Nile or a Ganges. Even the thought that the little white quay before me is a place where *he* once strolled makes my heart beat faster.

"The ship is superb: distinctive and roomy, with

two saloons, one on deck and the other very large and airy.

"GASTON."

NAPLES, September 20, 1896.

"Yesterday we sighted land only toward evening, and after that we tacked about, waiting for the day to dawn. Naples was like a ring of glow-worms in the night, with three or four great coals gleaming 3,000 feet above the town to the right. That was Vesuvius.

"When daylight came there was a mist. We were all on deck at three-thirty in the morning, waiting for a triumphant sunrise. Instead, a fine rain was coming down, and our entry into Naples was a disillusionment. The stench and dirt in the port are frightful; the houses are flat and yellow, with leprous, colourless shutters. Of course the weather was somewhat responsible for our disappointment; also, we had been so dazzled by our cruise along the golden coast of Provence, and even by the rugged peaks of Corsica, that this grey sky discouraged us and put us in ill humour. Well, we are going ashore in a moment, as soon as the sanitary inspector has been satisfied, and the enchantment will doubtless begin. The marvel of this voyage has been its smoothness thus far. France is delighted. To give you an idea of the tranquillity

of the sea, we have never stopped reading with candles simply set down on the table. Mamma herself has changed her opinion of sea travel and swears she never wants to leave her ship again. The crossing has been incredible: not a wrinkle, not a ripple, not a wave. I have never seen anything like it. The Seine is more upsetting. We can't even have a suspicion of discomfort. One of the qualities of this junk is that it is admirably airy below.

"A little sun has come out. Already the sky is clearing somewhat, but there is not the least hint in the world of the impression of prodigious voluptuousness sung by so many guitars. Such is the way of the world! . . .

"I have just heard a lot of squalling outside and put my nose out to see what was going on. We have suddenly been surrounded by an impromptu fair. A circle of boats has been formed around us, and the natives are busy displaying all sorts of things for sale. There are inlaid tables, mirrors, macaroni, sparkling wines, cold meats, singers, hawkers of unmentionable things, each in a different boat.

"GASTON."

"This morning we attended the Mass of Saint Januarius. It is streaming, flamboyant fetish worship. The most distinguished churchmen run up to one and beg for alms. The phial containing the

Saint's blood, which liquefies three times a year, is passed around in the crowd. In proportion to the speed with which the blood liquefies, the temper of the Saint and the prosperity of the coming year are calculated. The unfortunate thing is that in 1799, when General Championnet conquered Naples, the blood remained coagulated. The General then threatened to shoot the council of the chapter of priests, and the miracle took place immediately.

"Another boat has come out loaded with obscene books for sale. Since we are lovers of more wholesome pleasures, we are going back on shore to visit the thieves' dens and the public gardens."

24 September.

"Visited Pompeii. Terrifying. The curiosity of the world. France is enchanted. Spronck remains serious.

"I have your second letter. I never received the first. The postal service is crazy. The telegraph service is maddening.

"GASTON."

Gaston was unable to stay for the entire cruise. He left his mother at Naples, and she wrote him several days later from Palermo.

"As for Palermo, it is an adorable city filled

with marvellous things. There are several mosaic churches dating from the time of the Normans which are incomparably rich, and gardens full of tropical marvels whose grace is powerful and voluptuous. Well, you couldn't see everything, and Rome ought to console you somewhat. We are leaving tomorrow (this must remain a family secret) without having been to Girgenti.

"Our domestic life was somewhat upset by the unexpected arrival of a new Angelo [1] who was even more of a nuisance than all the others. No one could stir a step without his accompaniment. I became angry, and we have been quarrelling about him. Your father is very resentful, for he thinks more of this last Angelo than of any other."

When winter came again the memory of these voyages furnished new matter for the continually brilliant conversations on Sundays and Wednesdays in the Avenue Hoche. The faithful old friends were still there, and the pleasures of the salon were augmented by a group of young people whom Mme. Arman de Caillavet had commenced to receive since the marriage of her son. They all adored the theatre and loved to act in plays. Their charming troupe was directed by Georges Feydeau, the young dramatist then at the height of his popularity, and by Robert de Flers.

[1] A guide.

Two of Gaston's plays had already been performed on the little stage in the Avenue Hoche. One, *Colombine,* was a play in verse; the other, *La Sainte-Ligue,* was later performed at the Palais Royal Theatre. Then they put on two comedies with lyrics and costumes, one out of the collection known as the *Théâtre de la Foire,* called *Ninette à la Cour,* and the other, Favart's *L'Orme de Lucrèce.* Their success encouraged Mme. Arman to ask France and then M. Henri Lavedan each to write a play for *her* theatre. She wrote to her daughter-in-law:

"My dearest Jeanne:

". . . Gaston tells me that you are feeling very well and that you are thinking of acting. We must do something about this. France has not begun anything yet, but he seems to me in an excellent frame of mind for it. I am seeing Lavedan tomorrow."

But M. Lavedan was too seriously engaged to amuse himself with trifles. Mme. Arman, slightly hurt, told her daughter-in-law so, and counted now only on France.

"My dearest Jeanne:

". . . I have put off from day to day writing you, because I kept hoping that I would be able to

tell you a play had been begun. Gaston must have sent you the letter in which our kind friend Lavedan let us down. I have seen him since. We spoke of his dialogues, but I don't know if any of them is suited for the stage. As for France, he will have to deliver, but you know how he slips through one's fingers."

While France, harassed by Mme. Arman and despairing of finding a subject for a society play, was proposing a scene at a dentist's, which was repulsed with horror, and then a sentimental play about a Savoyard chimney-sweep, Gaston was working for him. Réjane wanted to play in an adaptation of *Le Lys rouge*. Mme. Arman was urging France to dramatize the novel, and France had asked Gaston to draft a scenario for him.

"Gaston [wrote Mme. Arman] has composed some very funny verses on the Lajeunesse duel; he must have sent them to you, of course. I think he is not working hard enough on *Le Lys rouge*. He will be leaving for the south before the scenario is drafted unless he stops wasting his time."

In July, 1897, they went on another cruise, this time to the Adriatic coast. Gaston did not accompany them, and his mother wrote frequently to the young couple.

Brindisi, July 9, 1897.

"My dear Gaston:

". . . It is almost as if we were at San Domingo and not in Italy. Here is our itinerary since we left Cannes: one day at Bastia; five days' stop at Naples, without de Mouy, but where Angelo plagued us cruelly. We parted in unfriendly fashion, as a matter of fact. The heat was overwhelming. Nevertheless, I was very energetic; I went to the Museum and the churches again, though I could not think of going to Pompeii. Fortunately, the oranges there are delicious, and from time to time we had a little sea breeze which kept us alive. We saw Messina again, and here we are, after forty-eight hours, at Brindisi. I hope we shall not linger here too long, but ports are very attractive to navigators. . . .

"The scenario of *Le Lys rouge* reached me at Cannes, but thus far your collaborator does not appear any too anxious to go to work. The *Echo de Paris* articles suffice to fill the hours during which we cannot run about in the torrid heat to visit the monuments of the arts throughout the ages. I think I wrote to you that we went to see Réjane in *Sapho* at Marseilles. She asked for her play."

Réjane saw two splendid rôles in the play for herself and Lucien Guitry.

July 10, 1897.

"My dearest Jeanne:

". . . Just now we are anchored in the harbour of Brindisi, a port of call for steamers which is at once Moorish and miserable and from which we are having a hard time getting away, because M. Arman and Captain Lerouzik cling to ports like two anchors hooked into the earth. We are about to sail for the wild lands of Cattaro, a place filled with Turks wearing belts bristling with jewelled weapons. But we shall have a difficult time getting there."

Trau, July 19, 1897.

"My dear Gaston:

". . . Having crossed the Adriatic in very bad weather, with its usual unpleasant consequences, we reached Ragusa. A jovial or brainless consul at Brindisi had told your father that we should be taken prisoner in the entry of the Bocchi di Cattaro. This little joke being settled, we went to Cattaro in a steamer, and very peacefully from there to Ragusa. The delta of Cattaro is far from terrifying, even as concerns scenery. . . .

"Since this morning we have been here at Trau. Trau also is a gem, but less pretty, all in all, than Ragusa. The costumes are less brilliant, but there are little marvels of detail here, little lions of Saint

Mark's; the place is a sort of vest-pocket Venice. We have still to visit Sebenico and Zara, after which we shall go to Trieste and then to Venice. Between ourselves, I think the nautical portion of our trip may well end there. Your father has worn out his maritime enthusiasm, and it was he who said he thought it might be better to send the ship back from Venice. The towns I wanted to see—Rimini, Pesaro, and Ravenna—have no port, and it would be easier to reach them by land. All this is still in the air, but in any case we shall not circle around Italy again. . . .

"I suppose we shall be home in two or three weeks, and I shall come to see you among your soldiers.[2] Thereafter we must do something about *Le Lys rouge,* for until now we have not given it much thought.

"Good-bye, dear Gaston. I hope that Jeanne and Simone are doing well and I send you all my love."

VENICE, August 1, 1897.

". . . We are still in Venice, where we have had a charming stay. The cool weather here was a surprise, and I have been able to see the innumerable interesting and marvellous things here without fatigue. A Venetian celebration is going on today

[2] Gaston was doing his "twenty-eight days" of annual service at Fontainebleau.

with boat-races, music, and singing in the gondolas. But this popular festival does not harmonize very well with the beauty of Venice, which demands the splendour and the magnificence of the olden days. I have had a letter from Mme. P—— so overflowing with poetry that I am almost drowned and enveloped in it myself. It is full of moons and sunsets and trees and deep pools enough to provide material for a century of sentimental song-writing."

VENICE, August, 1897.

"MY DEAREST JEANNE:

". . . We have finished our cruise, and Venice will be the last port of call. It would take too much time to follow the two coasts of Italy again, and we shall return home by rail. Dalmatia is curious. . . .

"But all that we have seen is insignificant compared with Venice, which seems to me more beautiful, more sparkling, and more triumphant than ever. The city is filled with sound, movement, and music, and I am astonished at the fresh admiration it calls up in me."

Scarcely had she returned to Paris before Mme. Arman took up again her rôle of unwearied *dea ex machina*.

Tuesday, September, 1897.

"My dear Gaston:

"You need not be worried; there can be no question of a play by Sardou for the moment. France learned this yesterday at the Academy from Halévy, who is intimate with Sardou. I wanted a letter written to Porel,[8] but there was a great deal of opposition to this. I was told that not a shadow of doubt must be allowed to appear, for it would make it easier for a not very trustworthy man to go back on his word. Therefore, you must go on working peacefully at a task which you appear to do with both zeal and enthusiasm. I expect something very good, and I hope that this *Lys rouge* will make our enemies blanch and will bring you definite recognition. I believe that this fashion of working by yourself, and then adding your work to your collaborator's, is better than close continuous collaboration, and will bring forth unexpected results. Each of you thus retains all the freshness and spontaneity of his ideas, instead of frittering them away in compromise and concession to the ideas of the collaborator. And when you work together again, your work will consist in choice and elimination."

". . . The appointment with Porel has been postponed. You had better come back, for he will

[8] Manager of the Vaudeville Theatre, where *Le Lys rouge* was to be performed.

want to discuss the play and the cast. I tremble to think of all the beauties you will have to sacrifice. You must acquire a heart of stone. As a matter of fact, the novel was over-rich in details, and that hurt its success. Insist upon retaining the political passages. *L'Orme du Mail* and *Le Mannequin d'osier* have given people a taste for them."

Tuesday, September.

"My dear Gaston:

". . . I hope that your work will bear fruit and that, the play once written, you will need only to adorn it with a few graces in order to put it into final shape. It seems to me you are an excellent collaborator for France, because he would be incapable of doing what you are doing. And between the two of you, you may turn out a masterpiece. . .

"The poor G—— family are feeling very miserable. Their new apartment is uninhabitable. Nothing has been unpacked or put in place. They are camping there, waiting for some mysterious salvation, such as a fire or an earthquake, to cancel their lease."

Meanwhile, Mme. Arman had to go down to Capian to discharge a steward.

"We are still in Paris, and today we are celebrating the return of Faure. Two modest little flags,

one French and the other Russian, float before the windows in the Avenue Hoche, but the streets about the Opéra are like a tricoloured forest, and I imagine that this evening people will be crushed in delirious and enthusiastic crowds. The day is grey, rainy, and cool, but it is not disagreeable to be in Paris now. I should like it well enough, but I have to go down to quarrel at Capian. I look forward with extreme displeasure to that and to the scenes I shall be forced to undergo. I think of it as a parting of lovers; there will be cries, violence, and tears. But one must not let oneself be softened by these things. . . ."

October 20, 1897.

"My dearest Jeanne:

". . . France is going to write a little play for you. I have advised him to choose a poetic theme (the Musset kind) except for the end, when the dentist can come in to give body to the programme. Ask Gaston if he has any ideas on the subject."

"My dearest Jeanne:

". . . It was only today that France read Gaston's scenario. He thinks it very pretty. He has sworn that he will begin to write the little play on Sunday."

Thursday.

". . . France is fairly well started, and I hope we may have a sensational performance that will make the B——s and the A——s die of envy."

It is plain that time had not obliterated the ancient rivalries!

In 1898 the French Academy was about to proceed to elect a successor to Meilhac. The forthcoming election was a source of considerable anxiety to Mme. Arman. Two of the candidates, M. Henri Lavedan and M. Paul Hervieu, were her friends. She wished them both to be elected, but both were candidates for the same seat. As a matter of fact, the two men were cordial friends; indeed, Hervieu had proposed, and it had been agreed, that the loser invite the winner to luncheon on the day after the election, by way of proving that no ill will subsisted. Without any previous collusion, the two candidates had the delicacy to refrain from soliciting Mme. Arman's support, for each was sure of her friendship.

"MADAME:

"Since you have had the goodness to permit me to fix a day and an hour myself, will you allow me to come to luncheon on Tuesday next, the twenty-

second? I want you to know in advance that my candidacy will not persuade me to abandon the self-imposed reserve which I am determined to maintain in the face of so cordially friendly an indulgence as yours. When one has the rare good fortune to be honoured by your precious friendship, the highest form of gratitude is to have faith and to remain silent. . . .

"Henri Lavedan."

"Dear Madame:

"I desire to express to you my gratitude for the renewed esteem contained in your charming invitation. Unfortunately, I am engaged for that evening. If my interests only were at stake, I should have the consoling thought that they were better off in your hands than in my own. But it is the pleasure I shall miss that I deplore. . . .

'Paul Hervieu."

Mme. Arman was painfully torn between contradictory sentiments. If, in the name of an old friendship, she urged France to vote for Hervieu, she would be betraying her intellectual affinities, which inclined her rather toward Lavedan. She took all this very seriously, unlike France, who, after a luncheon, had embraced Lavedan and smothered him in dithyrambic praise of his plays and books, saying finally in due fairness: "I am

pledged to Hervieu up to the hilt," and then adding a moment later with a smile: "But there is the hilt!"

Nevertheless, he voted for Hervieu. Mme. Arman had notified Hervieu on the eve of the election that his chances were very slim. Hervieu replied:

May 25, 1898.

"Dear Madame:

"I cannot tell you how profoundly touched I am by the active and considerate kindness which you were good enough to manifest during this period of trial. After your letter, and the news Hérédia has brought me, I can no longer entertain any illusions. Fortunately for me, I have an instinctive love of truth which compensates me for any pain or care as soon as I see its gleam and touch reality. I abandon error with the joy of a freed prisoner. I hope that I may appear to you such as you wish me to be and do me the honour to believe me to be.

"Nevertheless, I am still very interested to see what tomorrow's vote will bring forth. I want to learn the opposing votes in order to decipher the mystery they enfold, and also because I feel myself greatly involved in their human significance. . . ."

The election resulted in a draw.

May 27, 1898.

"Dear Madame:

"I want to assure you again of my gratitude for the sympathy with which you helped me to this result. I think it excellent, the more so as you deign to congratulate me upon it.

"Paul Hervieu."

In December, the election was repeated with the same candidates, and M. Henri Lavedan was elected. The question of the luncheon was not revived. In 1900, Paul Hervieu obtained a seat in the Academy. This election gave rise to the incident which led to France's estrangement from the Academy. The incident was all to the honour of France's delicacy and dignity. M. André Maurel writes (*Souvenirs d'un Ecrivain*): "The blame rests upon Paul Hervieu, who acted . . . only on an ill-advised scruple and was the first to be sorry for what his hasty action brought about. Hervieu's candidacy took place in the very midst of the Dreyfus affair. However desirous he might be to enter the illustrious body, he was firmly determined not to do so at the expense of recantation, or even of the slightest reticence. He insisted upon presenting himself with all his beliefs, the pro-Dreyfus convictions as well as the others. . . .

"France took Hervieu's election to heart," and

"strove greatly in his friend's favour. He praised and defended him with astonishing ardour." Hervieu was elected by a plurality of one vote. "France had won him more than one, and Hervieu knew it." France expected that Hervieu would designate him as his Academic sponsor. "Hervieu felt that he owed this recognition to his friend, but the sense of relief resulting from his success, the natural desire not to appear to be assaulting an adversary who was already down, upset him somewhat. Very early in the morning he sent to France, who lived near him, a note excusing himself for not designating France as his sponsor, and explaining that to do so might displease those Academicians who had voted for him despite their nationalistic, anti-Dreyfus convictions. And he gave their names.

"France," M. Maurel continues, "immediately replied that his friend Hervieu need have no fear, that he would never again trouble him with his friendship. Hervieu perceived instantly how great had been his error, and was overwhelmed. . . . He could not, of course, obliterate his note. All that he was able to do was not to lose France's friendship, thanks to a display of sincere contrition and deep affection. . . . The fact remained, however, that Hervieu had asserted that certain Academicians . . . could not see France take his seat

among them without a secret uneasiness, because his attitude was so violently opposed to their convictions. From this, France drew the only logical conclusion possible to his dignity." He declared that since all the members of the Academy took no pleasure in seeing him, he would never again set foot in the Academy. "When this decision became known it created a great stir. Everybody tried to persuade France against it, but in vain. He remained away until 1916."

In 1903 Frédéric Masson was elected to the Academy; he did everything in his power to bring his old friend back under the dome on the Quai Conti. M. Maurel thought he had found a persuasive solution: "It consisted in obtaining the consent of three or four Academicians to call on France and lead him to his seat. The Academicians agreed." But Mme. Arman, who had resented the offense against France more than he had resented it himself, declared that in order to efface the wrong, the Academicians who called on France must be those "named by Hervieu as unwilling to meet Anatole France."

This stipulation ended the negotiations. At bottom, France had been exceedingly bored by the sessions of the Academy, and he was not at all displeased to have a striking pretext never to return. Whenever Mme. Arman spoke sharply of this inci-

dent, he would say: "How can you detest people who have rendered me such a signal service? They have rid me of a chore that weighed heavily upon my indolence."

From this time forth a marked coolness intervened in the relations between Paul Hervieu and Mme. Arman de Caillavet. "Simple, dependable, faithful in her affections," says M. Maurel, but "frank enough to kill a man," she could not hide the rancour she felt against Hervieu as the source of this notorious incident. The following proud and witty letter from Hervieu gave her, in very respectful fashion, a lesson which she surely seems in this instance to have merited:

"Dear Madame:

"I should certainly remember—and I do not remember—having been informed that I impressed you as a bore. In any case, please feel assured that I should not have been idiotically chagrined if I had been told this. To be a bore seems to me somewhat like having a cold: it would be extraordinary to be forever in this condition, and on the other hand, no one may flatter himself that he has never had the experience.

"I beg you to believe me, dear Madame, your respectful and devoted

"Paul Hervieu."

In February, 1898, Mme. Gaston de Caillavet, Robert de Flers, and George Feydeau played the second act of Maurice Donnay's *Amants* with so much success that France finally gave them *Au Petit Bonheur*. He wrote in March to her who was to act in his play: "While you are breathing in the warm blue air, I am working for you under a grey sky. . . ." Mme. Arman was very proud to have France's *first play* performed in her home. All her friends were present on this brilliant evening, and those who were prevented from coming sent their regrets:

June 2.

"MADAME:

"Politics are frightful; they condemn me to nocturnal conferences as in the heyday of great conspiracies, and they threaten to monopolize all of my time this evening. I shall try to escape from this slavery, but if I should not succeed, and am not present in response to your kind invitation, I want you to forgive me in advance. I shall always regret not seeing *Au Petit Bonheur*, and you may be sure that I shall pour out upon my political friends my wrath at not being able to applaud the author and his interpreters. . . .

"RAYMOND POINCARE."

She replied:

"Your presence was the only thing missing from our little celebration the other evening. And sincerely, I missed you the entire evening. The performance was worthy of you, and I am sure you would have enjoyed it. Therefore I have begun to detest politics, which, until now, I merely looked down upon with indulgence."

M. Raymond Poincaré, who was a frequent visitor in the Avenue Hoche, has had the kindness to permit us to quote from two or three of the notes which Mme. Arman de Caillavet sent to him:

"You have brought yourself to my mind in such graceful fashion that I hope you will not consider me indiscreet if I think of you myself. . . .

"I am going to ask something of you that is entirely incongruous and irregular, but I shall run the risk, for, as the proverb has it, nothing ventured, nothing gained. Would it be possible for you to come in to luncheon today? Réjane invited herself yesterday, and I learned of it only on my return from the country very late. I have collected three or four friends this morning to whom your presence would be a delightful addition. If you cannot

come, I shall still have the momentary pleasure of hoping to see you, and even that has its price."

"I am writing to thank you for the flowers you so kindly sent me. Please believe that I greatly appreciate your thoughtfulness.

"As for poor S——, let us be indulgent toward her, since she has only importuned us in so far as our patience and our malevolent curiosity have allowed it. Of how many women could we not say as much! Perhaps I shall call and prove this to you some day. In the meantime, I am cordially yours. . . ."

It was in 1898 that Mlle. Emma Laprévotte accompanied Mme. Arman de Caillavet for the first time on one of her annual holidays with France. Mme. Arman was too absentminded, and France too meditative, for these trips to be anything but veritable catastrophes if some one were not present to look after their itineraries, their tickets, their baggage, and their lodgings. Left to themselves, they forgot to mind the time, took the wrong trains, lost their bags, went to the wrong hotels; and their days passed in recrimination and lamentation. Mlle. Laprévotte fulfilled her function so admirably and was so agreeable a companion, that

Mme. Arman de Caillavet nicknamed her Mlle. Perfection and begged her never to leave her service. Mlle. Laprévotte remained with her and attended her with great devotion until the day of Mme. Arman de Caillavet's death.

When spring came they went to Germany. At the end of the season, M. and Mme. de Caillavet took their son and France to Greece in their new yacht, *Nausicaa*. Gaston wrote to his wife, who was not of the party:

"A horrible wind! We have all been in the state you experienced off Cherbourg, but from one in the morning until noon! The captain says he has never known so difficult a crossing. Finally, after some six hours, we sent the *Parthenon* to the devil. We have all been equally sick; so no one feels any jealousy. Mamma lay down throughout, strapped into her berth. It was impossible to sit up on deck unless one sat on the ground and clung desperately to the rail.

"I am forgetting to speak of the ship. It is extraordinarily sumptuous and wonderfully well laid out. There are four superb cabins, two little ones, a square saloon, part of which has been fitted up as a library, and on the upper deck an alcove in which one can stretch out languorously. But yesterday all this seemed to me more hideous than a

pigsty and more abominable than a brigand's cave. It took on a little charm again with the evening breeze and the calm of the waters rippling in the moonlight, but I am still a very much upset sailor."

France was usually an excellent sailor and entirely unperturbed by the most violent storms. One day, in rough weather, he refused to go below, and remained on deck in the way of the crew. He was finally tied to a mast, a procedure to which he submitted with good grace, reciting poetry in a loud voice that rose over the sounds of the ship and the sea. The sailors looked at him in amazement and muttered to each other that he was crazy.

Monday, September 20, 1898.

". . . To give you an idea of Greek administration, let me tell you that on our arrival at Zakynthos yesterday morning we were received by a gentleman in a braided cap, the harbour-master of the island port, whose coat collar was greasy and strewn with stars. Having directed us to a spot where we might anchor, claimed his tip, and saluted with a courtesy devoid of humility, he left in a four-oared rowboat. One hour later he was back on board, wearing a top-hat of green felt with a *straw ribbon* around it, bringing us samples of wine, raisins, and oil. He asked sixty francs for a

small cask of wine of Samos. We offered twenty. He smiled bitterly, made the gesture of a Leonidas, and accepted with gratitude. When he left, his handshake was much more discreet, but something of a Miltiades still shone over him. We went ashore, had a look at a church, and found ourselves face to face with the same individual, painting the letters on a sign over the entrance to a hotel. He told us that he had just procured a carriage in which we were to visit a magnificent garden.

"An hour later we were on our way through a tiny town of low houses squeezed one against the other. They have an earthquake here every two or three years, and in order to escape accidents and economize at the same time, they build all these little things that look like doll-houses. The houses are of every style: Venetian, covered with carvings, and English covered with vines; yellow and blue and pink houses; and when you look down on them from the hillside they look like a flock of sheep huddling together in a storm against the bell-tower in which the green bells are chiming. For two long hours you make your way across an imitation Tuscany through grey olive-trees and black cypresses, climbing little brush-covered hills that undulate toward the sea, wandering across all the backgrounds of all the primitives of Arezzo or Perugia.

"Finally you reach the much-advertised garden. A door opens and you see a desolate waste, without a blade of grass or a bush, beside which the neighbouring heaths seem like so many oases. A menacing and repulsive aloe provides the only shade, and in the midst of this desolation our government servant stands smiling and declaring: 'I am ze gardenaire.'

"After this adventure we did not see him again until nightfall. He came out with a boatload of musicians to sing the lays of the country beside our ship. This time he wore a sheepskin cap and carried a *guzla*[4] slung over one shoulder. Having sung, he asked us if we didn't have a pair of old shoes to give him.

"GASTON."

"This morning we crossed in a rough sea from Zante to Catakolo, the port from which raisins are shipped. Many boats are constantly being loaded with them—these souls of cakes and of plum-puddings—leaving to carry their cargoes wherever there are loyal Englishmen. They ship to Australia, New Zealand, and Canada; to Egypt, New York, the Cape, and Hongkong. And on the distant horizon I seemed to see looming up, smiling with all their long teeth, the bony English girls who

[4] A native violin with a single string.

under all the skies of the world, in deserts and in archipelagoes, on continents, islands, and peninsulas, are at this moment sowing in their dough the raisins of poor Greece and dreaming of a long series of satisfied luncheons and comfortable cups of tea. . . .

"I have discovered among other things that Hercules was a prodigious Tartarin; he is shown on the most celebrated façades to be fighting only some crab or little cuttle-fish which was later to become the Hydra of Lake Lerna. But he was an excellent stable-boy and a first-rate milker."

This discovery gave Gaston the idea of the operetta, *Les Travaux d'Hercule,* which was his first play written in collaboration with Robert de Flers. Claude Terrasse composed the music for it.

The dramatized version of *Le Lys rouge* was performed at the Vaudeville Theatre in February, 1899. Réjane and Guitry were admirable in it. On the night of the first performance Mme. Arman de Caillavet gave a little supper which was attended by the principal actors of the play and Mme. Madeleine Lemaire, France, M. Georges Clemenceau, Paul Hervieu, Marcel Prévost, Marcel Proust, Robert de Flers, Tristan Bernard, Gaston, and his wife.

A little later Pierre Veber published in the *Vie*

Parisienne a review of the play which Gaston considered insulting to his mother. He fought a duel with its author.

A letter from Proust to France written in this year brings to mind how France worked in the Avenue Hoche, and informs us that it was Mme. Arman who found the pretty title, *Sous les Ormes du Mail,* which was afterward slightly changed.

"My dear Master:

"In rereading *L'Anneau d'améthyste* I remembered the dear days when *Le Lys rouge* was still without a title and was known as 'the novel.' 'The novel is going forward,' Mme. Arman would say. Then there was that thing about which it was impossible to say at first whether it was a definite and identifiable person or not, and which therefore we would call doubtfully 'the *Echo* article.' Soon we were able to refer to it as 'the Bergerets,' 'the last Bergeret,' or 'the next Bergeret.' It retained that name for a year until one day Mme. Arman, coming in late for luncheon and being scolded, had the presence of mind to find *Sous les Ormes du Mail.* And the name of Bergeret became once more the name of the story. I do not know if it retained that name in the Avenue Hoche. But I am inclined to believe so, and that it is only the past periods that are ended in the names of *Le Mannequin d'osier* and

L'Anneau d'améthyste. *L'Anneau* is the most beautiful of all. And surely your genius grows steadily greater. That which, in a strongly guarded room, where no one dared speak—I mean M. Arman's study—was the caprice of your hours, has already become the entertainment and the instruction of the ages. The '*Echo* articles' and 'the Bergerets' have turned out to be *L'Anneau d'améthyste*, the most accurate human comedy, the most complete encyclopædia of the manners of our age, the memoirs of an equitable and harmonious Saint-Simon. Who was to foretell that the rarest gift of poetry that ever existed was one day to become popular? This glory is yours. The predictions of Gen. Cartier de Chalmot concerning the Spanish war, and the dialogue between Guitrel and Bonmont, are on everybody's tongue. The words of M. Bergeret 'who loved the ceremonies of the church' have been committed to memory by the crowd. Your gaiety, like that of Molière and Cervantes, is enjoyed by the simplest minds, while the most subtle lose none of its savour. . . .

"MARCEL PROUST."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet's influence over France's work was maintained during their separations by an active correspondence. France was the first to revive it, and often by the most charming

stories. He appreciated with pleasure the form of her letters, and never omitted to compliment her on them.

BORDEAUX
Grand Hôtel Métropole, 2, Rue Condé
Morning, October 1st.

"DEAR MADAME:

"The water-colour that I have seen as often as it can be seen is what you think it. It will never make Decamps rich.

"We were awakened this evening by a terrible noise—I speak of my hosts and fellow-guests, for catastrophes create fellow-feeling. Some one was shouting 'Fire!' A woman I could hear but not see was moaning: 'Save my child!' All the windows giving on to the Rue de Noailles were broken. I put on my clothes, in order to save the child decently. The cellars of the Hôtel du Gaz were afire. The theatre fire-pumps extinguished the blaze in ten minutes. But I saw little Mme. Métropole, in her night-cap and flannel dressing-gown, weeping before the flames.

"I shall see you soon, Madame. If I had stayed at Capian I should have spent a better night. I have forgotten to tell you that I was unable to fall asleep because of a row which broke out among the theatre chorus at midnight. I shall not say, as your young friend says, that Bordeaux is like London;

but my night was like one of those Hogarths in your picturesque store-house. This effect is due principally to the sight of Mme. Métropole in her night-cap, with the flames lighting up her tears. . . ."

From Paris: "Sunday evening in the shadow and the silence. . . ."

"I hope that the angry wind you describe so well has died down and that you will see the sun setting magnificently. . . . Your letters are charming."

"I have worked rather stupidly for an hour. I have seen no one with the exception of Eugénie, Louis, and Marie-des-Chiens.[5] Horace says that Virgil carried away half his soul when he went travelling. Even so much is not left me."

"And in front of 93 I came upon Paléologue.

"Young, charming, drawing a puppy behind him, pro-Dreyfus without passion, with limpidity. He is writing a book on mediæval Rome. Nothing stirs him, he says, except the men and women of olden time. He wants an Antigone or a Berenice."

At this period the Wednesday dinners were enriched by new guests: the very youthful Comtesse

[5] Mme. de Caillavet's servants.

de Noailles, her husband, and her brother, Prince de Brancovan, the Baroness Aimery de Pierrebourg, and Jaurès. Mme. Arman, who loved to tease France, would say: "When Mme. de Noailles is present you fade into insignificance. Her dazzling mind, her playful grace, and her sparkling conversation makes yours seem heavy and slow. . . ." France, not at all annoyed, would reply: "That little girl has genius."

On the day after Mme. de Noailles called with her baby, Anne-Jules, in its nurse's arms, Mme. Arman wrote to her:

"DEAR MADAME:

"Ever since you called here it seems to me that a glamour, a perfume, and a melody still float in the air about me and that the divine echo of your poetry has glided among the wreaths and garlands of my rooms. You are exquisite, delicate, and fine, like those whom we celebrate; you are an elf and a little fairy; but your soul is so vast that it contains the world, and all the mysteries of joy and pain pass tumultuously and heartrendingly through it before their birth upon your lips. And you are also a Titania, queen of orchards and of gardens, wreathed with grapes and wildflowers. I hope that you will let me celebrate your coming another time, and that I may bring you and our friend France

together, since, between ourselves, you are the only two people with genius now living.

"Believe me your fervent and cordial admirer,

"L. ARMAN DE CAILLAVET.

"My best wishes to Anne-Jules."

The youthful muse wrote to her gracefully:

"Thank you for your kind and beautiful letter. I am extremely sensitive to praise so pure as yours, whose expression is a delicate pleasure to the heart and the mind."

"What I wanted to tell you was how greatly I enjoyed the evening at your home. It was such an evening as one spends only with you."

"The late hour at which you will receive this note is a proof of the long and tenacious hope I retained until this moment; but I know now that it will be impossible for me to attend the charming luncheon, for I should be a guest in ill health, and should give you no pleasure. It was difficult for me to form this resolve, and as I cannot endure all its effects, I hope you will allow me to come in later to sit among you and listen to you. . . .

"I dared not believe that, having been ill until today, I should have the strength to go to see you

after all, and I see that will is merely desire. I renounce the luncheon with a better heart, knowing that I shall be happy afterward, and that this first deprivation is merely that precious ring which the Greek throws into the sea to satisfy Nemesis."

"I am happy to be coming to see you tomorrow, and very conscious of the favour of your gracious friendship, for your brilliant and formidable intelligence adds much to the value of your charming kindness to me."

From the early letters of Mme. de Noailles to France we extract the following passages expressing her fervent admiration:

"It astonishes me that I should dare write to you and speak to you; it would be better if you had a rustic altar before which we might hang perfumed bits of wax, shaped in the image of our hearts."

"I shall come shortly, then, full of joy and confidence, remembering that Apollo, too, was a healer. . . .

"Please believe in the sincerity of a heart into which your genius has cast a great light."

Mme. Arman was very happy whenever the "child of genius" consented to recite some of her beautiful poems in the Avenue Hoche. Her friends

also recognized the worth of such a favour. This letter from Gustave Larroumet expresses the disappointment they felt when they could not profit by it:

"Dear Madame:

"I wish you to know today the reason why I shall not be able to come to hear the poems of the Comtesse de Noailles. At the moment when you will be listening to this fresh, ardent poetry, I shall be gravely occupied at the Board of the School of Fine Arts in a discussion of the problem whether or not the life models in the women's classes shall wear tights. Such is the professional duty of which I am today the slave. I beg you to convey my lively regrets to Mme. de Noailles. I am looking forward eagerly to the Sunday when I may be able to call and tell you how greatly I appreciate and am touched by your invitation."

The following note from J. H. Rosny is typical of the appreciation of all those who were present at these delightful gatherings:

"The evenings I have spent with you and your friends are among those that no one could forget without being particularly insensitive to exquisite hospitality and charming company."

Jacques Coulangheon was presented to Mme. Arman de Caillavet by M. Louis Barthou in 1902. Before his twenty-sixth year he had already been chief assistant to the Prefect of the Department of the Oise, a situation which had inspired in him a contempt for politics and a charming book, *Les Jeux de la Préfecture*. Mme. Arman de Caillavet very quickly welcomed him into her intimate circle and conceived a genuine and material affection for him. Since he lived at Mantes, he was unable to come to the Avenue Hoche as frequently as he might have wished. We owe to his absence from Paris an almost daily correspondence. A few of his letters will suffice to speak eloquently of the quality of this young man and of their friendship. Death, which hovered in the offing, ready to carry away the poor lad at the slightest sign of illness, left him only too little time in which to bloom.

"12-4-'02.

"MADAME:

"However quickly our hours may pass, do you really believe those of youth to be the most precious? I have been able to rid myself of a task I was to have done Saturday, and shall be free. I am sure I shall not like M—— L——'s play; therefore it is not because of the play that I am happy to accept your invitation. How exquisitely,

and in what excellent company, was the magic lantern shown to us the other evening! When I am beside you in Paris, and when, at your home or at the Odéon, I find those whom I call—without the slightest shade of aversion or sympathy, since I do not know them—*people,* I feel as if you were operating a magic lantern for me. And my pleasure at such times is delicate and profound, less childish, unfortunately, than it was the other evening, when I had the pleasure of meeting M. Maindron. How grateful I am that you put me next to him, the best, surely, among all the best who were present! and how lovely were the pale colours of the flowers in the epergnes! I owe you already very many pleasures of taste and many more of the mind. I owe you the greatest, which is to have known the only man of our time to whom I would sincerely give the name of master, if this homage, which was in the beginning so touching, had not now become odious by vulgar and silly repetition. And then, to borrow one of Mr. Brandes's deplorable forms of pleasantry, there is also that poor Jules Lemaître . . . who seems to me—I say this very respectfully—to possess a great deal of importance in your eyes. . . .

"Madame, I am distressed to learn that Mme. de Saint-V—— should praise a novel into which I have poured only the ideas of others. Not that

the personal praise of Mme. de Saint-V—— is not very agreeable to me. But I should like to have displeased some people. And then, the entirely Cyrenaic indifference which I have striven to adopt in my thinking will be mistaken for *cleverness*. This of me who love Stendhal, who did not love the phrase 'happy medium.' Now that I have pleased the altogether charming and modest Mme. de Saint-V—— I am afraid to discover that I am a 'happy medium.' But after all, did Mme. de Saint-V—— like my book? I am not very sure she did. And I do not doubt that Mme. de Saint-V—— is no more sure than I am.

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

MANTES, April 26, 1902.

"MADAME:

"I am distressed about the letter I wrote to you the other day. The little memory I have of it suffices to assure me that it was devoid of common sense. One should not write.

"I did not go to Compiègne because I wanted to see M. France on Thursday morning. The Avenue du Bois, in the morning, is perfectly charming. The new verdure all in bloom, the sombre tones of the grass, the wistaria, the lilac, the laburnum, the spectacle of useless but delightful beings, hand-

some horses, and pretty frocks, all put my soul in an exhilarating mood.

"Madame, I came away from M. France in distress. Had it not been for the works of art and the beautiful sixteenth-century wood-carvings that M. France showed me, I should have come away in sorrow.

"Madame, I should still love M. France if he were the president of the Republic, or a member of the Chamber of Deputies. For I have always loved him (without knowing him) for what he really is, stripped of the appearances lent him by social life, or the attitudes which circumstances have forced upon him.

"But I do not wish to believe in politics. My experience, my studies, and my reading have led me to believe with a great deal of pride that politics are never anything else than commercial conflicts. Shall we sell rosaries or fire-water, army commissions or revolutionary bonnets?

"I am writing to you, dear Madame, with some timidity. Really, I ought to write at great length to say what I mean. A letter is always a dangerous matter, because one is never sure of being understood, and one is never present to explain one's letter.

"Madame, the play by M—— L—— is certainly stupid. But the most stupid character in it is the

banker, M. Moulins, who repeats 105.40 in the last act like Molière's miser repeating 'without a dower.' M—— L—— is a good schoolgirl, and 'hurrah for the schools' where this is the way they study. Bankers make revolutions just as they make wars. M. Moulins the banker was a fool to 'bear' the market. One must always be a 'bull' when speculating on a revolution, particularly when the revolution is to take place in France.

"Madame, the bankers of today make and unmake politics. We shall always need bankers just as we shall always need priests.

"Elections have no other meaning than to insure the triumph of certain bankers over certain other bankers. The socialistic faith is even more deplorable than the Christian faith. The kind of political Protestantism that M. France seems to have taken up horrifies me more than you can imagine. This is why I left his little house in sadness. . . .

"I was speaking of my sad leave-taking from him who seems to me the wisest man of our time. There were young men at his house who cared very much whether they were governed by M. Méline or by M. Waldeck-Rousseau. The conversation would have been distressingly political if M. France had not spiced it with a few teleological considerations.

"Madame, I am afraid of all dogmatism. The

young people who gather about M. France at this moment, and to whom he listens with a smile, are all dogmatic. And that is exasperating. They have faith in Humanity in the way those about Abélard might have had faith in God. They are a lot of crusty visionaries, and their altruistic ideology contains no more passion than the egoistic ideology of Barrès. They are all equally disagreeable to me: I make no distinction between the Léon Blum type of socialist, the ideal donned by M. G—— at the Council of State with his latest embroidered waistcoat, and the crabbed, shabby socialism affected by my friend Péguy. I am equally afraid of them all.

"But it is a mistake to be afraid of them. They form part of a whole which chance guides as well as can be. So long as political parties combat each other, the sage may think at leisure and articulate his most contradictory thoughts. Nothing is forbidden now except to exalt anarchism. But don't you think that if ever a socialistic régime is established (and I have no clear notion of the meaning of these two words), freedom of thought will be as gravely threatened as by the Catholic Inquisition?

"Madame, I have never pictured Salenta or Plato's Republic, or the cities of Thomas More or Campanella, without sorrow. I imagine that

Fourier's phalanstery would very soon resemble the Jeanne d'Arc barracks at Rouen where I served my term in the army. And even aside from Utopia, social service would always seem to me overwhelming. But to tell the truth, it is not because I fear their creations that I avoid socialists. It is because they despise the individual and thus tend to finish the long degeneration undertaken by Christianity. These ideas are not my own, but I believe in them with all my power. I hate socialists, and I hate supporters of the clergy. You understand, of course, that the word *hate* as here employed is merely a word that expresses with energy the passion of my conviction. I do not believe in the existence of social questions. At most there is only a question of subjective morals to which no one pays any attention.

"It was a phrase of Lassalle's that cast a light upon socialism for me: *The German workman must be made to know how miserable he is.* It follows that the German workman did not know the measure of his own misery. He was therefore not so miserable after all.

"The danger is that the growing socialization of humanity will leave no room for spirits free of dogmatism. Society has considerable trouble in killing rebellions with its legal apparatus; it starves them, which is more discreet.

"It is because of all these thoughts, Madame, that I left your friend's house in sorrow, remembering, out of the magnificent prelude to the *Virgin of the Rocks* which d'Annunzio placed under the invocation of Leonardo da Vinci: *E si tu sarai solo, tu sarai tutto tuo.* I have always loved these words as *an act of faith.* . . .

"Nowadays, socialists want to conquer happiness, or rather, since we live in a financial age, they want to found *Happiness, Inc.*, a sort of world-wide cooperative with shares of the lowest denomination. They make me think of the 'snow-ball' system that certain shopkeepers instituted two or three years ago. The B—— ladies, daughters of a former broker, delivered marvellous petticoats, worth ninety francs, for fifteen francs. The swindle was worldly, well bred, and transcendental. It was based on cunning mathematics, and as it took place through the aid of innumerable and ignorant accomplices, it somehow touched unreality, became ideal, or metaphysical, at least. The B—— ladies, in the most honest fashion in the world, did not sell for fifteen francs what had cost them ninety. But as infinity exists only in mathematics, the public prosecutor interfered with this subtle application of the law of combinations and of Taylorism.

"Madame, the systems of the socialists make me

think of the petticoats of these ladies. I shall never believe in the multiplication of wheat loaves. It's a pity. This is the only socialism I might have believed in. . . . And this is why I did not go to Compiègne. I heard too much about elections at M. France's. The thought of hearing more about them at my friend Reboul's sent me home. I bought the third number of *Les Arts,* in which your guest, M. Manzi, displays his taste. And I spent a long time looking out of the train window at the valleys filled with white cherry-trees and the fields of green rye. . . .

"I hope that this damp weather will not make you melancholy or restless. And I beg you again to forgive me. I must tell you also that I have ceased to write, and this not through indifference. Only, I am wiser than I was, and I know that I have nothing to say.

"I beg you to believe me, dear Madame, very respectfully yours,

"J. A. Coulangheon."

Mantes, April 28, 1902.

"You may not believe me, Madame, but the only time I feel myself to be something of a decent person is when I am far from women and from books. While my fear suffices to defend me from women, I have to employ a great deal of reason to be able

to resist books. Still, I never steal any. To do that would be to give pain to those from whom one stole—and then, there are the police.

"When I have bought books, I can never resist the pleasure of carrying them off under my arm. I do not mind appearing ridiculous with a few thick quartos, bound in marbled calf, under my arm. Fortunately for me, my folly is quickly restricted by every sort of reason, in which my own plays no part.

"My contempt for *their* universal suffrage and *their* republic is as lively as ever. Régimes are merely the insignificant settings before which the same play is eternally performed. They say at Compiègne that M. Noël was maltreated physically. My tailor is a nationalist. Here, Lebaudy, the deputy, received 3,000 votes more than in the last election. On my way to the Saint-Lazare Station, in front of the Church of Saint Augustine, I saw a regiment coming home. And I understood the recent elections in the way one understands a theorem in geometry.

"Remember, Madame, that I have been a soldier, and that it is in the barracks that one comes into closest contact with the great servile habit of western civilization. The words I employ are not used in an invidious sense. I neither like nor dislike the army. I look upon it as a form of administration,

a little more numerous than the railway or the bridge-and-road administration. The average stupidity of those who compose the army is not more patent than any other. I am sorry not to have the patience and the time to speak to you of this a little more methodically. Do not think that the army is *forced* upon us. Of course it is true that the obligation to die some day on the battlefield is a terrible one for all soldiers. But you may believe me when I say that the social existence, the mode of living, whose formula is constituted by the barracks and the army, is far from painful to the great majority of men. Isn't it, by the way, the complete application of the socialist régime toward which we are tending? The army is the most complete enforcement possible of the collectivist idea. And army life is *rapidly* accepted by soldiers. They submit to it with a tranquil annoyance. And the habit of this mechanical and disinterested existence ends by impregnating them so entirely that liberty becomes a burden to them. The psychology of the soldier on a Sunday would be clear on this point. There is no great diversity between social servitude and military servitude, between the factory or the plow and the barracks.

"Add to these elements the patriotic glory served out to these men with their mess and munitions, the collective vanity they feel in their gilded uniforms,

their music, the strength they feel themselves to possess, their weapons—one is very brave at night with a revolver. M. France has not analyzed all this. You may be certain that four-fifths of the Frenchmen who have been soldiers will vote for the Nationalists. Are you not aware, Madame, of the power of the phrases which accompany the award of prizes? Have you ever attended a gymnastic contest, or a firemen's contest? And have you ever watched children—I am not speaking of *yours*, of *us*—play at factory or at workmen? They play at thief and at policemen. Observe the singular and the plural. There will always be more policemen than thieves among children. They play at soldiers; you know that: a drum, an old apron, two pots, a hobby-horse, and wooden swords, the same as they will do later on. Here again is where we touch the *instinct* of the races. The pompous phrases of M. Barrès will add nothing to this reality.

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

MANTES, May 16, 1902.

"MADAME:

"I am not happy. Is that vulgar? But if one is not unhappy when happiness is missing, then I am not unhappy. Is not happiness most frequently all the things which one lacks? One should not

wish to be happy. One should be astonished to be happy, and most of all *to be able to imagine* that one is happy.

"The most beautiful thing that can console us for living is friendship. It is the only thing that justifies our brief term on the globe.

"Friendship is enough to make us cherish life, and enough to fill us with horror at the thought of the necessary darkness. But you know how difficult it is. It is encountered only at moral altitudes which few people know how to reach by themselves. Most of us meet in the valleys. And then we have to climb together. You know that those who climb together do not always reach the summit together.

"It is true that I *want* to think love is merely the diversion of a certain period in life. I know that this is nothing but an instinct which I am disguising with so much cleverness! But it disturbs me. And thinking of love, I cannot make up my mind to turn away from beauty. But the perfection of the body does not often allow me to forget the awkwardness of the mind. I do not want to neglect what is vulgar, and I am overwhelmed by it.

"Still, I am not disgusted with love. My instincts are too frank for me to detach myself from women. The contempt I feel for them is merely

the affectation of a disappointed lover. My feeling about them resembles hatred more than indifference. And though I find it hard to hate them, I cannot disdain them. The least thing about them enchants me. I do not love them all. But how I cherish all those who prevail! How I hasten to deceive myself about them! It may be true that I should like life to be a sort of garden where I might breathe in the perfume of roses which allow themselves to be inhaled but not picked. But there is little wisdom in the things of this world. The roses one culls are the quickest to fade. Wise men know this. And wise men also cull their roses. Sometimes they lack even the patience to wait until the roses have faded.

"I bore myself to the point of ruining my pleasure, which is idiotic. When La Rochefoucauld maintains that the reason why lovers and mistresses are never bored with each other is that 'they talk of nothing but themselves,' he is speaking like a fool. For it is precisely this game that is the most boring. The truth about love is that people please one another so long as they do not know one another thoroughly. We live on the unexpected. Habit brings us nearer to death. The triumph of love is never to grow accustomed to one another. The triumph of friendship is probably the contrary, and this problem has every chance of remaining un-

solved. I pass it along to Capus, 'who sees solutions.' I *never* see solutions. Fate is made of skeins. The Gordian knot is cut only by soldiers. There is no reason to grow ecstatic about Alexander. His sword-blow is a corporal's joke. The marvellous thing is to untie the knot! But the knots of the world in which our lives are entangled are never untied.

"Madame, the bloom has not gone from the world! Only, our joys have been surrounded by obstacles and scruples through which we cannot break. Life has become a sort of public park with beautiful flowers surrounded by defensive wire netting. There is too much wire. The flowers are there, but we can no longer enjoy them. When we try to cut through the wire, a civil servant in uniform hauls us off to the jug. I was taken there when I was a student, because I had culled a sprig of geranium in the Luxembourg Gardens (I should do myself an injury if I confessed this to everybody). . . .

"Madame, it is late. . . . Time passes quickly when one writes to you. I know everything that I should like to say to you about distinction in art, and that you would feel with me.

"I hope that you are not suffering from this unpleasant weather, which desolates me. I *never*

weary of the sun. And I never have any but splendid and joyous ideas in the sunlight.

"Farewell, Madame. I am going to read a little Lucian before going to bed, and *Don Quixote* before falling asleep. If prayer serves any purpose, then I pray that you may have peace. I dare not wish you more, for it might irritate the gods, who are jealous.

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

MANTES, June 2, 1902.

"MADAME:

"I am very sure that none of the promises contained in your letter will be fulfilled by life. You are exceedingly shrewd. I need not dissemble with you: I was not made for this world, and I really suffer in it from a kind of awkward and poignant fear. Moreover, I do not know how to lie, which is a defect. I haven't the energy to succeed. And I feel myself defenseless.

"I have a bouquet of carnations on my table; my little garden is filled with roses; there is a wooden bench on which I shall sit and read Herodotus.

". . . I am young and sound physically and mentally. All that I desire in the world is that which would make my life fuller, stronger, richer in beautiful things. I do not wish to have the stupidity to go and fall in love with the wife of 'one

of the finest shots in France.' *And I feel myself very capable of doing so.* I love delicate people and things too much to restrain myself *in these matters* within the limits of what is *good for me.* All this would merely be a source of sorrow. And then, I am not a gambler. I bring to everything an impetuous and tenacious soul. I am still an Auvergnat by blood; even culture cannot Hellenize me.

"Besides, I have no will. This is a proof of intelligence? That doesn't console me. The one thing I miss in society is women, whom I miss in the melancholy and desiring fashion of M. Bergeret missing Mme. de Gromance. Cherubino is not the only one to 'sing a pretty song to Madame.' I sincerely believe that at my age these little perplexities, these lively torments, and these amorous sorrows which form part of feminine adventures are a rather pretty occupation. They are at least as entertaining as pigeon-shooting. But they are not my forte. Later, such people go in for elegant bric-à-brac.

"As for me, I think that I shall live 'in my stove,' surrounded by books, like a fish surrounded by the shells in its aquarium. But the city of books is a necropolis; books, I am afraid, are as hollow as tombs. Ideas pile up in them, vague and acrid, like ancient ashes. The only thing worth while

is to live, to burn. And living does not mean thumbing eighteenth-century quartos in russet calf, or white vellum folios dated 1650.

"Do not trouble to give this another thought, Madame. I am grateful to you for having received me with kindness. I am nothing of a Lohengrin, but something of a Julien Sorel, plus certain scruples. I should never have *taken* Mlle. de la Mole. My idea of liberty is so exalted and so false that I should have waited until she had *given* herself. And, not without reason, Mlle. de la Mole would have considered me a fool.

"Madame, I shall dine with you on Wednesday. If I have an opportunity, I shall call on M. France, whom I love. I shall call on you too. And then I shall isolate myself somewhere, in Corrèze or elsewhere, for quite a long time. . . . I cannot forget that you live in Paris. I shall return to it.

"These are my intentions. But I am a man. So many things may contradict one another . . . and I myself.

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

MANTES, June 7, 1902.

"MADAME:

"I met Prometheus at your house the other evening. He spoke to me in the person of M. X——. He was an ultimately discouraged Prometheus, as

weary as the folds in his evening clothes. And I saw that if he was not more resplendent in his revolt against the gods, it was because the clever gods had robbed him of his eagle. He had not even that irony which M. Gide has given to his *Prométhée mal enchaîné*. How evident it is that Prometheus lives. . . .

"I found him alone, as was fitting, his arms loosely flung over the back of a great Louis XVI. sofa. Sad thoughts bowed his head. He looked at me out of the most terribly despairing eyes, eyes of enigma and desolation. I came forward. I greeted him with the fear one duly assumes in the presence of the demigods. He did not speak to me of his love of mankind, but of how difficult it was to entertain men in order to draw a little money from them. 'Work is painful to me!' he sighed at first; after a pause, with an accent of indescribable weakness, and raising a forearm which he let drop limply, he added: 'In these days of lightning!' He was silent.

" 'In these days of lightning!' My heart beat. I recognized Prometheus by his distaste for lightning, and by the facile and frivolous tone he used in speaking of it.

"I enjoyed greatly being in your home the other evening, Madame. I took nothing seriously except the hour's chat I had with M. France. I followed

your advice somewhat. Your daughter-in-law, who is beautiful, taught me the frivolity of fame and the vanity of intelligence. She is a shining paradox.

"If I were Mlle. Vacaresco I should not have my verses recited by Mlle. P——, who makes people detest them. I have heard Paul Mounet and Mme. Weber declaim alternately some lines of Haraucourt's. It was one of the most grotesque experiences I have ever undergone. Are tragedy and nobility composed of so many hiccoughs? Art is the obliteration of all idea of effort. Mlle. Piérat reciting that great 'thingumabob' of Hugo's on love made me ill. They ought to leave Hugo to Mlle. Dudlay or Mme. Weber. Hasn't Mlle. Piérat Chénier? If I were she I should recite in a small, liquid voice, taking my time to do it, a few sixteenth-century verses, or M. de Régnier's little odes, or Samain's sonnets . . . or the verses of Mme. de Noailles.

"Farewell, Madame. You must not be angry with me. Hesitancy is freedom of the mind. Believe me very respectfully yours,

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

MANTES, Friday.

"MADAME:

"Do not speak to me of my books. You will

spoil our friendship and ruin the pleasure I take in an intelligence that is rare in a woman devoid of pretensions.

"I have caught a heavy cold and this stormy, rainy weather tires me very much; also, contact with a violent, capricious, and slightly silly woman, who is proud and pretty, and for whom I still care with some regret. These things are beyond reason and will. One does not choose one's loves. And one clings to them on incomprehensible impulses in which memory, habit, desire, and weakness all have their part. One tries unsuccessfully to break away, with quarrels and stupid tears. And then one day you separate when you least intend it. What ridiculous tales! And what poor creatures, to give ourselves so much trouble . . . and pain.

"25-6-'02.

". . . Mme. X—— was very beautiful last Sunday under her little concealing veil and her wide hat with its roses. But how can one believe in sexual selection and the admirable prescriptions of Darwin when one sees that she is able to love M. Z——? I know no face and body that call up so irresistibly as his the picture of a saddened and wasted pug-dog. Do you think M. Z—— has entirely lost his natural voice? in a fire? or was he knifed by a cutthroat? Would he be able to find

it again if he had to cry for help, and make himself heard a little? I incline to think he would; at least, I hope so. Mme. J—— has a pretty nose. Mme. de Saint-V—— continues to astound me by her mastery—innate, I hope—at making colours shriek at one another. I assure you that I am not being nasty. One must look at the world in the same frame of mind as when one examines a collection of caterpillars under glass."

This correspondence displays, although with more reserve, the same biting tartness as his *Lettres à deux femmes,* from which we quote a few lines concerned with Mme. Arman de Caillavet's salon:

"I dined in the Avenue Hoche. . . . I sat between M. P——, a sculptor, and M. G——, a poet, I believe (I shall soon see the seals from the Zoo). . . . M. G—— recited some verses. M. G—— believes in his genius with the astonishment of an infant looking into the pot at its most recent deposit. . . ."

"Mme. de Noailles has sent me her poems. She has a considerably finer talent than the lady de la Rue Mardrus. . . ." [6]

The noblest sentiments also are to be found in Jacques Coulangheon's letters.

[6] Letters published by the *Mercure de France.*

July 3, 1902.

". . . Madame, I have never spoken to you of my father. He was a man of wonderful intelligence, integrity, courage, and taste. His father was the village clerk; his grandfather was a miller. My father, an engineer by profession, knew almost everything: read Homer in Greek with emotion, bought old books, beat M. Cassagnac at fencing, was wild about roses, bought M. France's books with joy in *1888*. It was he who read me *Le Livre de mon Ami*. As he was exceedingly sensitive, he did not hold back his tears when he came to the passages which reminded him of his own childhood. The man did 10,000,000 francs' worth of construction: four forts and the port of Dunkirk; was twice robbed by partners 'too clever for him'; was almost ruined by the General Water Company which made him wait twenty-three years for the 600,000 francs they owed him, and died of weariness and sorrow at the age of forty-seven. He went through life with the glorious faith of a too noble soul. He had fought beside Rossel during the Commune. At the time of the Panama affair he wept with rage for a week whenever he spoke of it. He had known Eiffel at school. During the Boulanger wave he wanted to make speeches in the Eleventh Arrondissement.

"The memory of my father will always prevent

me from believing in the slightest in human beings. This honest man convinced me of the uselessness of merit. Life was never anything but unjust to him. And he died crushed by it.

"But this is hardly an entertaining letter, Madame.

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

". . . Fortunately, it is nothing serious, but still it is rather painful. I am far too nervous, and for the time being I am worn out by work and troubles. There are times when I have to struggle rather hard here against little pestering things that exasperate me. My mother is surrounded by unindulgent relatives. My too sedentary days do not make me any too patient. These little miseries are the worst, because they are continuous, and one often becomes agitated about them.

"It is often good to feel that one is loved, supported, sustained, sheltered at least from the exasperations and the petty, cruel maliciousness for which there is so much opportunity when people live together.

"Madame, I am half sorry to have mentioned these silly things to you. But you know that it is the little things in life that make it what it is."

MANTES, Friday.

"I have just found the bit of paper on which I

noted that my first visit to you was made on February 4. I hope that your kind friendship for me will resist all assaults upon it, and that you will continue to be indulgent toward me. 'One cannot go far in friendship if one is not disposed to forgive little defects.'

"Alas, mine are great ones."

MANTES, October 21, 1902.

"*To Mme. A. de Caillavet in the Gironde.*

"The red vines upon the walls of my little garden remain pretty during these foggy afternoons. I hear a pump squeak, and as I write to you I glance at a copy of Titian's portrait of Laura, a photograph I bought yesterday when I came away from the Louvre, where I never tire of spending hours and hours. Art and reason still seem to me to be the two luminous words in our dark life. They are the two most sure, the two most powerful emotions that touch and reassure me. And if I fear death with so much intensity, it is because nothing beautiful survives without light and without thought. These are thoughts well keyed to the pitch of autumn, but I have not been writing rhetorically; I really believe them.

"Madame, I have a new overcoat. It is a very ample coat with a velvet collar that surrounds me with wealth and majesty. The railway porters run

for my valise, the ticket collectors ask for my ticket *politely*. My handsome new overcoat is fertile in courtesies. The hack-drivers come forward eagerly when I raise my stick. The shopkeepers beg me to sit down. And I feel prouder, more bold, more daring, in my comfortable overcoat. But I know that the respect of lowly people seeking tips, the inviting glances cast at the well-dressed 'prospect' by young women, and even the smiles of my maid, will wear out along with my overcoat.

"When my new overcoat has lost its shape, when it is all puffed out by the books with which I weight down its pockets, the hack-drivers and the porters (not to speak of society folk) will no longer see in me anything else than a contemptible person, at best somebody entirely insignificant. The ticket collectors will hustle me on. I shall raise my stick, and the drivers will look cross-eyed at me without stirring, turning their whips in the air, as much as to say, 'Gotta go get another horse,' and 'You don't look as if you could pay for a two-franc ride.' And I shall be less proud, and perhaps (for who is ever heroic?) a little saddened by such prompt and penetrating contempt, as I was when I wore my old overcoat, bought three years ago, nut-coloured, double-breasted, and now ridiculously out of fashion. My beautiful new overcoat, Madame, is teaching me the secret of the ingenious springs of

a policed society. And I know by it that the necessities of social commerce have nothing to do with reason. But sometimes I am made to suffer by the disdain of hack-drivers, janitors, railway employees, booksellers, my maid and other women, because I am still young.

"Madame, I am respectfully yours.

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

"8-12-'02.

"Madame, I never leave your salon on a Wednesday or a Sunday without a feeling of sadness. Of course I do wrong to speak to you often with so much sincerity. I think Alceste is a ridiculous fellow, and I am not a misanthrope. But I shall always be astonished when I hear tittle-tattle, pinchbeck tittle-tattle, being exchanged in the midst of graceful and intelligent conversation. What! is it among free spirits that people are to be found who grow angry because they have not had an invitation, and that Corinne quarrels with Sappho over the type and number of her loves? Those who visit you are people of taste whose wealth has put them in contact with the wit of the world. And aside from a few familiar voices, who among them speaks of beauty?

"The snobs are enchanted when they hear the *Internationale*, but very few of them were moved

when M. France, speaking of Tacitus, described the beautiful return of the ashes of Germanicus. M. de Bouchaud was saying to me the while that he was amused to see both Mme. Mardrus and Mme. de Noailles there, and that he had covered himself by dedicating a sonnet to each of these women poets in his forthcoming volume.

"What shall I say of the 'black swan' who was herself so disappointed in me?

"Despite the Byzantine head, the eyes have the shrewdness of the Occident. The hands are Roman, small and plump, healthy and lively under the weight of the rings. I love fragile bodies, doubtless because my forbears were robust millers in Auvergne, and I love weakness because I am strong. But I am ready to love all women, because they all have their beauty.

"I shall say even less of the muse's mind. I should need to surprise her in the open air, on a sunny day in summer. We talked about medicine (!!!). I know that the brain and the stomach are very close to each other. And that, yes, that was all.

"I have a great deal of inner sensibility, you know; I absorb, by a strange gift of analysis, the least signs of a foreign thought; the wink of an eye, a pressure of the lips, the slight movement of a finger.

"Mme. de Noailles is gracefully coquettish. She plays at queen, at that queen of hearts in the old English song, who has them carried before her in a silver bowl.

"But you know, too, how filled with fear is my first contact with women. I am always afraid of burning myself. I envy the self-possessed and sovereign courtesy with which Marcel Prévost speaks to them. He begins by stepping on their gown. If idiocy is a compliment, I pay them mine spontaneously. And every woman I like is sure to make an ass of me. As a matter of fact, I never think of literature when I am with them. Books are one joy to me, and women another and a rarer one, and much more difficult. Most of them give me thoughts that are completely naked and savage in their simplicity, and even so little civilized that often I want to seize them by the wrist and say, 'Let us get away from here!'

"For at bottom I am very brutal. The habit of frock coats and silk hats hampers my gestures and obliges me to choose my words; but it has been very hard for me, ever since I became civilized, which is to say almost since my childhood, to refrain from thinking that one can take whatever pleases one. I am not so calm that the bare shoulders and the lace-enclosed body of a charming woman do not

torment me. And then, I am not tired. Here you have, Madame, my excuses and my impressions.

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

"MADAME:

"You must never wish me anything. M. France invited me to luncheon by wire. *But* the wire arrived last night in my absence (I was at a family dinner), was tucked away in the cook's account-book, and I got it only at dinner-time today.

"Add to this the weather, a headache, divers and tenacious worries, and you will see that I am not always happy.

"I beg you to retain a little kindly interest in me. I deserve it. I know its worth, and I have not much that is equal to it.

"I am yours respectfully,

"J. A. COULANGHEON."

MANTES, January 14, 1903.

"I thank you, Madame. Things are not going well, but, as you know, I do not like to complain. What torments me is that *I cannot work*, and I need to be able to work.

"Some of my hours are trying. It is dreadful to have no self-confidence, and to struggle hopelessly. I believe I am stricken with sterility. I spend hours of stupor over the dizzying white

paper; I criticize myself and am disheartened at each line. I open a book in disgust, *some one else's book,* a *beautiful* book, and the day passes. And I have a great grief that you cannot understand; it complicates my sickly state and my future.

"Ought I to be telling you this? It is bad for a writer to avow his impotence. But you will forgive my savagery and my weakness. I am not posing, not even as a failure. Very few indeed share my misfortune. Dissatisfaction with oneself is not a virtue; it is an infirmity. I suffer from it very seriously. I am not far from believing myself done for. I shall die of the books of others. This simply proves that I have no talent, that I have written nothing but literary exercises. And then, it is stultifying to chop up human stupidity in order to sell it in paper packages at three francs fifty each.[7] I am not intelligent enough to do it with an air of authority. *Authority!* that is what I lack. There is the source of my ruin.

"What is the alternative?

"Become a grocer? I'm willing. But it is a bit late.

"My brother-in-law, to whom I have mentioned chucking it, advises me to become a chicken farmer in Greece. How useful it was to learn Meleager and Bacchylides by heart!

[7] The uniform price of all paper-covered novels in France before the war.—*Translator's note.*

"Madame, I have a great sorrow, and not a literary one, either.

"I want to shake this off. I must *do* something, or I shall die of boredom and chagrin. I should have remained a sub-prefect. But that was an empty life."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet hastened to reply:

"Your letter reached me last night; it touched me. Alas, you too bear 'your burden of these miseries that are the lot of every human creature,' as a charming princess said to me who was herself unhappy. And it is not I who would wish to add anything to your burden, even the weight of a goose-quill.

"You know very well what things I appreciate in you, and that I should never ask you to take your place among the society women, the officers, and the penny-a-liners who clutter up my Sundays, unless that pleased and amused you. You know very well that there was feeling in my reproach, and that therefore it should have moved you. And you ought to know also that you can count upon me and upon France for any service we are able to render you. If I say *able to render,* it is because I am thinking of our strength, and not at all of our zeal on your behalf. I had spoken to Mme. de

Noailles about a position for you at the *Renaissance Latine;* she was to have done something about it, but poets are wafted at the wind's will. I saw Brancovan Sunday in the midst of a rout and was not able to have a word with him. What do you think of this sort of post? I assure you that I should be sincerely and truly happy if I could afford you any comfort. We shall discuss this more thoroughly than we have done thus far. France has enormous influence, and he will be happy also to help you. Until Sunday, then, and one other day of the week, for I shall be leaving soon after that. . . .

"And never, never believe that your worries detach me from you.

"L. Arman de Caillavet."

April 10, 1903.

"Madame, the static condition of my ill health continues to worry my doctor. I should have no more fever. Why does the water remain? It is the immobility of a bad condition. Yesterday and all last night I had stomach pains that were really beyond all reason. The days pass in waiting, the long days and the bad nights. Time is what I regret most. One lives so little. . . .

"As for the Minister's letter, it frightened me.

Shouldn't I tell you this? I found in it all the classic official, parliamentary, and ministerial formulæ of a note of La Châtre. You see, the fortress is not Father Combes, but Edgar, the chief of personnel, who holds in his hands the fate of all the little silver-trimmed puppets of France and Navarre. And Edgar, a former prefect, is pitiless. I am afraid, Madame, that you have taken a great deal of trouble over this. And you need calm. Go to Rome, where you will have roses and sunlight.

"You will be away two months, during which, I hope, I shall grow well again. And if you wish me well, we shall speak of it again. Perhaps I shall have been appointed sub-prefect at Embrun or at Forcalquier. But I shall refuse; I know the value of political promises."

He did not get well.

"I almost died Tuesday in dreadful agony. . . . I *felt myself* going for two hours, despite ether, morphine, injections of all sorts. I was cold. Two doctors were out of their heads. My body is sewed with little points of fire, cupping-glass, and mustard plasters. I'm in a wonderful state! . . . How I suffer! . . ."

He died on May 14, 1904. Mme. Arman de

Caillavet expressed her genuine grief to Jacques Coulangheon's mother:

"I can do no more, alas, than to join my affliction to yours, and I assure you that this affliction is deep. I cannot find words with which to tell you what I feel at the death of this young man who was so gifted, so well endowed to shine in life, and so prematurely taken from his family and his friends.

". . . I do not think I shall ever fill the void he has left in my little circle of intimate friends. He was really one of the elect among my friends. I hope that his end was not too painful, and above all, not conscious."

The last time that Mme. Arman de Caillavet went to see him he murmured to her: "Tell M. France that I am dying like a sage."

She had tried to find him a wife a little while before he fell ill. Despite her notorious distaste for marriage, she often tried to convert her friends to it. Her attempts, as a matter of fact, were always made in vain. It is easy to understand that she could not persuade many prospective couples if she accompanied her attempts by reflections of the kind she wrote to her son in 1889.

In 1899, M. Marcel Prévost replied to one of her suggestions as follows:

"My life is absolutely regulated to accord with the freedom—perhaps a little selfish—demanded by the conditions of my work and my taste for travelling. Since I am thus content, I should fear to waken Destiny by making the slightest change. It is a long time since my decision in this respect became definitive."

But in 1903 M. Marcel Prévost had changed his mind, and he wrote to Mme. Arman de Caillavet:

"The fact that I am no longer a bachelor is not a reason why we should never speak to one another —is it? The more so as your letter about my marriage was so perfectly witty and pretty that in a collection representing famous letter-writers it would be one of the wittiest. I am preserving it preciously."

It is probable that Mme. Arman de Caillavet had reminded him playfully of his "definitive decision." M. Marcel Prévost has been unable to find this letter. We regret it the more because he judged it the "wittiest and the prettiest" at a time when Mme. de Caillavet was in her best form, if one may judge by her correspondence with her children. Here are several examples:

"My little Jeanne:

"What you say about the little S—— girl is

full of wisdom. The truth is that one has the right to nothing at all, and that whatever one is able to snatch in life is due to chance and luck. The world is a confused heap in which one finds a place as well as one can. But she and her mother have acquired bookish souls (I mean souls of books) and believe that life, like a novel, develops along a single line and is composed of incidents which never fail to occur at just the right time. This is an absurd way of looking at things, and one that leads to all manner of disappointment.

"As a matter of fact, happiness never comes to those who watch at the window for it, either. In such circumstances it is called, as you say very aptly, pleasure, and that isn't worth a snap of the fingers—at least in my opinion, which is probably not that of all women."

"My dear Gaston:

"We are breathing freely again since Wednesday, but it has been terrible. People of uneasy conscience have been able to have a foretaste of the fires of hell. And I see it has been the same everywhere. . . .

"During these dog-days the 'mad desire for the cross' [8] has raged with intensity. Anna de Noailles is still the great favorite. G—— has crept up a

[8] Of the Legion of Honor.—*Translator's note.*

few points. M—— is nowhere in sight, and Pozzi maintains that he should be made commander because Robin is one, and it is unfair to give Robin this advantage with the fair sex."

"My dear Gaston:

". . . By way of news I can tell you that Mme. de Noailles will surely be decorated, and G—— probably. Jaurès, in a state of exasperation, has told them at the Ministry that he insists upon living in peace, that G—— is making life impossible for him, and that they must give G—— the cross he has never accepted himself. So that G—— will stoop for his cross as though it were a cigar stub."

"My dear Jeanne:

". . . In shutting the glass door I broke it and received a slash in the wrist that had to be sewed up. This is a sort of needlework quite devoid of pleasure when one furnishes the cloth oneself. However, I think I shall be able to leave off the bandage between now and Saturday."

Among Mme. de Caillavet's papers were found a quantity of letters from Robert de Montesquiou. They are all marked by an immense pride and a desire to please her. He wished to win through her the favour of her illustrious friend, but despite this

desire and fear, his letters are often sharp and supercilious.

"I am sorry that I shall not see you. It seemed to me that I was about to have an opportunity to allow you to judge more closely, and, who can say? perhaps appreciate more kindly, the ferocious—and excellent—man who has only flowers for you. . . ."

"Here we are far from snobbery, as you see; I mean bad snobbery, for there is a good kind—that which consists in feeling charmed, if not heightened, by contact with the great (in mind and in heart). One would dislike oneself to be free from this kind. . . ."

"It is always a mistake to write long letters, even when they are inspired by a legitimate desire to justify oneself, or show oneself at one's best. . . ."

"Please believe that nothing addressed by me to you could be 'marked by superciliousness,' for that would be a mark of impropriety and silliness, two characteristics which, I hope, my nature, rich in imperfections as it is, will always be able to avoid. . . ."

For a number of years, Montesquiou continued to invite France to call on him. He organized "sen-

sational" presentations, but France, who sometimes accepted his invitations, never went to see him. Several letters of the poet-nobleman betray a violent fury, held within bounds by the fear of displeasing him whom he flattered persistently. Finally, "one day of pomp and pageantry," Mme. Arman de Caillavet persuaded France to accompany her to the Pavillon of the Muses. Montesquiou thanked her:

"It is not very easy to prepare noble encounters. Let us not forget that it took seventeen years to succeed in that of the other day. It is true that such an accomplishment was well worth the price of years of waiting."

This "noble encounter" was the meeting of the Comtesse Greffulhe with France and Mme. Arman de Caillavet.

Replying to a question from Mme. Arman de Caillavet concerning an invitation which he had advised, Montesquiou said:

"This particular case requires the employment of tactics. Moreover, there must be no sensibility shown. That pride which our great friend loves intervenes fortunately to assure us that not to accede to requests which honour us entails true regret only for those who refuse."

One perceives here the feline claw directed at France for his innumerable refusals. Montesquiou amused Mme. Arman de Caillavet; she had a great deal of indulgence, even weakness, for his faults, which she proved at the time of the scandal over the celebrated rhymed *Portraits*. Her son, rightly indignant, insisted that Montesquiou be forbidden her home. She was satisfied merely to dress him down in private. Nevertheless, he continued on all occasions and in any company to recite his odious *Portraits;* but one day his victims were avenged by Mme. Gaston de Caillavet. It was at the close of a party given in honour of Montesquiou by his friend Mme. Madeleine Lemaire, the painter. The last guests were leaving her studio to the accompaniment of the enthusiastic exclamations of its mistress—"What wit! What originality! He is delightful!"—when Montesquiou drew Mme. Arman de Caillavet into a corner and recited several of his *Portraits*. He was cynical enough to wind up with the one on Mme. Lemaire herself, to whom he owed the sort of apotheosis then ending, and finally by that on Mme. Arman de Caillavet! Mme. Gaston de Caillavet's dismay and repulsion delighted him hugely and he said to her in a high-pitched voice, with a burst of laughter: "Silly young woman. Don't you know that however

amusing it may be to speak ill of one's enemies, it is delectable to speak ill of one's friends?"

With sudden inspiration, and with that innocent air which, joined to her timidity and the malevolence of certain frequenters of the Avenue Hoche, had won her a sound reputation for simple-mindedness, she replied slyly: "Oh, now I know who wrote that particularly venomous sonnet about you that one hears everywhere. You wrote it, of course! What wonderful refinement! After your enemies, your friends, and after your friends, yourself; what subtle perversity!" Montesquiou, green with anxiety, asked her where she had heard this sonnet, and if she could repeat it. "It is to be heard in all the drawing-rooms, clubs, and newspaper offices of Paris," she answered; "but it is too terrible for me to dare. . . ." He never dreamed of questioning the truth of her statement, nor of securing corroboration of it, but rushed to the *Figaro* to interrogate Calmette, Emmanuel Arène, and the others who were there. Delighted to be disagreeable to Montesquiou, they immediately became the accomplices of Mme. Gaston de Caillavet, refusing however, to quote a single line—and with good cause, for needless to say the avenging sonnet had never existed.

Montesquiou almost had jaundice. Unfortunately his anguish died down when, Mme. Gaston

de Caillavet having been unable to refrain from telling others this story about the malicious man, the truth was revealed to him. Greatly relieved, he screeched, "That little goose wanted to kill me!"

In 1906 Montesquiou desired to go to Capian. Neither Mme. de Caillavet nor France wished him there. He came, nevertheless, after preparing his coming slowly by slipping into each of his letters an allusion to the desired visit. In one of them we read:

"We never see each other in Paris, even when we meet. We are all scattered or concentrated; it amounts to the same thing."

In another:

"The idea of meeting again a master whom I admire with all my heart, in the home of hosts I appreciate and who, whatever you may say, are not 'modest,' is infinitely fascinating to me."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet turned a deaf ear. He grew more insistent:

"Am I wrong in feeling that your letter, despite its grace, has an air of reserve and almost a tone of displeasure? If I have not succeeded in making myself liked by you, it is not because I have not

wished it, for I have acted impulsively, simply, and sincerely.

"It is once more the fault of those wicked portraits? I never offer to recite them; people burn to hear them until the moment I commence, when they are grilled . . . and burn with desire to burn their author."

Finally, she had to give in, and Montesquiou wrote:

CASTEL D'ARTAGNAN.

". . . I should blush to have invited myself to luncheon. But to devour immense space and vanquish great difficulties in order to visit you—is not this what my ancestor would have done? I hate and refuse to take the tramway, just as his shade would do."

A few days after his visit, he celebrated it in a flowery letter:

"What a joy to have news of you, reminding me of that beautiful day, rainy in aspect but sunny within, on which it was given me to spend unique moments by your side, in your house among the fields and the vines. . . ."

He closed his letter of thanks with "the respect-

ful homage of a sentiment I have already imparted to you, and which is not ready to die out."

Loti, whom one never saw, even when he came to Paris, Loti, who fled society, came nevertheless to the Avenue Hoche.

In 1909, after a luncheon, he inscribed his name on the pedestal of a little statue of Bacchus in the dining-room. France wrote his on another little god, one of a pair. Mme. Arman de Caillavet had a framed bit of glass put over Loti's signature, which is still to be seen. She omitted this precaution for France's signature, which has become obliterated.

The newspapers announced that the naval station at Rochefort was to be suppressed. Loti, whom this news upset greatly, asked Mme. de Caillavet to procure reliable information for him, and to use her influence to combat the decision.

"My dear Master:

"Herewith the information Pelletan has given me for you; it seems rather reassuring and of a kind to satisfy you.

"But shouldn't your wish alone have sufficed to save this maritime fortress? Are not the wishes of great men the regulations of destiny?

"I am counting upon seeing you when you come

to Paris. Do not forget that the twenty-second of June is of all dates a commemorative, revelatory, and precious one for me.

"I am yours in all admiration and sympathy. . . ."

"DEAR MADAME:

"You have done something for my poor Rochefort which I shall never forget, and for which I thank you from the bottom of my heart. Will you allow me to keep M. Pelletan's letter for a few days? I do not dare thank him directly. If you see him, will you convey my thanks? . . .

"PIERRE LOTI."

"If Pelletan's letter interests you, dear master, keep it, and do not thank me for the little I have been able to do for you who have so marvellously beautified the world. I believe that a note, if you do not think it too irksome to write, would greatly flatter this former Minister of the Navy.

"Shall you be in Paris around the twenty-second? I should like you to meet a young woman who is as beautiful as Aziyadé or Djénane, and who is alive and admires you. Where are we in our mutual confidences? May I tell you that you hurt me a little the other day? Would you like to be the cause of suffering?

"L. ARMAN DE CAILLAVET."

"Do you seriously mean that I caused you pain? Forgive me; I swear that I did not wish to do it. Searching in my memory, I think I have discovered what it is about. I said that jokingly; please forgive me.

"Thank you again for Pelletan, to whom I have written.

"The twenty-second, no; it will be impossible for me to be in Paris; so much the worse for the beautiful lady. I shall be there from the first to the third of July, and I hope you will let me call for a moment.

"I beg you, dear Madame, to receive the homage of my respectful and *trusting* sympathy.

"PIERRE LOTI."

"MY DEAR MASTER:

"Your letter is altogether charming and relieves my mind completely. I shall not grow frightened the next time. But remember that you are still like a mysterious and sacred country for me, into which I venture trembling with emotion. Henceforth I shall know that from these enchanted lands a sprite occasionally jumps out and turns a somersault. Are you not an elf when the mood seizes you?

"Everything is contained in everything, but the appearances donned by genius are disconcerting to

simple people. And so, dear sir and friend (I may call you so, may I not?), let it be the first, second or third, as you choose, but I hope you will accord me a luncheon. I shall try to have the beautiful lady, who is away at present but has promised me to return. . . ."

"2-7-'09.

"I have just arrived in Paris (where my name is M. Louis Viaud, Room 567, Hotel Palais d'Orsay). I am leaving on Sunday morning and am busier than you can have any notion of. But I want very much to see you, the more so since I feel that I have caused you a little pain. Will you be good enough to appoint any of two different days, at your choice? As for the other beautiful lady, so much the worse for her. . . ."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet had often intended to visit Loti at Rochefort or at Hendaye. In 1906 he had written to her:

"I expect to return to Rochefort toward the fifteenth of October. I shall not forget that you have once more promised a visit that will be very precious to me, and I hope that you will not fail to keep your promise."

With another letter, undated but written long before this one, he sent a photograph of "a garden

in which I shall be charmed to receive you this summer." Mme. Arman de Caillavet was unable to accept any of his invitations. In April, 1909, he insisted:

"I returned yesterday to Rochefort from the Pyrenees, and shall stay a month. This is the time during which you led me to hope for your visit, and I want to tell you again how delighted I shall be. It was almost a promise that you made me, and it seems to me that you should keep your promise. . . .

"I have not dared send the acrobat picture, thinking it insufficiently clothed."

It was not until October of this year, which was to be the last year of her life, that Mme. Arman de Caillavet was able to carry out the plan that had beckoned to her for so long, and visit Loti at his home.

France's *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc* appeared in 1908, and in the copy he brought to his old friend he inscribed: "To Mme. Arman de Caillavet, this book written by her side, now among her Bordeaux vines, now on the shores of the misty ocean, in witness to an indestructible affection."

Indeed, between the red lily of Florence (1894)

and the white lily of Joan of Arc, many years had passed, embellished by charming sojourns at Capian and at Quiberon in Britanny (where Mme. Arman often went in the summer), and by travels throughout Europe. The enthusiasm with which Mme. Arman de Caillavet, France, and their friends were welcomed wherever they went, the receptions and celebrations held in their honour, lent to each journey the air of a triumphal tour. Invitations and visits multiplied from the moment of their arrival wherever they stopped. Mme. Arman complained of these *corvées*, but at bottom she was overjoyed with the triumph of her friend. It was she who had made it possible. They went to Italy year after year. They visited Greece seven times. They travelled in many other countries, but they loved only Italy and Greece, where, as Pierre Mille has written, "for a thousand years the stones have been taught to speak a beautiful language."

From Rome, Mme. Arman wrote:

HOTEL BEAU SEJOUR.

"MY DEAREST JEANNE:

"I arrived here through snow and storms, but I have had the satisfaction of finding quarters that are agreeable, quiet, and very modest in price, thanks to the efforts of that excellent man, Primoli. For twenty francs a day, inclusive of everything, I

have a bedroom and sitting-room in the purest Moorish style, with Arab tapestries, mosque lamps, and a bed resting upon a negress adorned with golden bracelets. I have joined the Monods and Arthur here, my Sunday Arthur. We are waiting for Julie, who is detained in Paris by an intimate romance in the life of her son (mystery and discretion). I saw M. de Noailles yesterday. He arrived alone in his motor car after running down a numerous population on his way across the Saint-Gothard. He told me so himself with a great deal of gentleness and no remorse. He is expecting his wife, who will doubtless not come."

Ostensibly Mme. Arman de Caillavet was harvesting the fruits of her intelligent and tenacious devotion. France's glory radiated from her salon, and those who had anything to request of the great man were obliged to come to her. It was true that he received on Wednesday mornings in the Villa Saïd, and that many petitions were presented to him there, but his absentmindedness quickly forgot the promises made by his affability. Mme. Arman not being there to hear and take note of them, they blew away as soon as France opened his door.

Adrien Hébrard was well aware of this, and

when he desired France to resume his contributions to the *Temps* it was to Mme. Arman that he wrote:

"I have carefully chosen Wednesday the thirteenth in order to have the pleasure of dining with you, even though I may encounter at your table the insufferably obstinate person whom I need not name. It seems to me that if you were as ready to do my bidding as I am to do yours, you would persuade him to resume his conversations, more liberally this time, with his admiring readers of the *Temps*. To think that I love him just the same!

"*Un doux nenni avec un doux sourire*
Est tant honneste. . . ." [9]

France's reputation was world-wide; he had only to ask in order to obtain whatever he desired; but Mme. Arman alone was able to draw from him the indispensable letter, or guide the conversation to the point where "M. le Ministre" could refuse him nothing. No one can conceive the flattery and the servility of which this Egeria was the object during these "great years." What letters still lie at the bottom of an old box, as in a tomb! What confidences, supplications, avowals, favours obtained, evidences of gratitude, and of ingratitude, too!

[9] "A sweet nay, nay, spoken with a sweet smile, is so fair."

Often, without referring requests to France, Mme. Arman wrote herself to her powerful friends. This witty note from M. Clemenceau proves it:

PRESIDENCY OF THE COUNCIL
MINISTRY OF THE INTERIOR
OFFICE OF THE MINISTER

PARIS, September 7, 1908.

"DEAR MADAME:

"I shall do everything possible to satisfy your request. But how embarrassing it is when eight hundred senators and deputies, each with one or two candidates, put their knives to my throat every morning! I should never have thought that there were in France so many distinguished young men desirous of making themselves useless to this degree.

"Please accept, dear Madame, my respectful homage.

"G. CLEMENCEAU."

The following letter to M. André Maurel, which he has published, and in which she evidently consoles him in his disappointment, shows that she was not the victim of illusions:

"Besides, Briand, whom I know well, is the most facile promiser and the slipperiest of men. From Clemenceau you get, at least, a refusal. That is

something. These gentlemen seem to me to be caught in an almost inextricable labyrinth. Thus far, though, they seem not to be aware of it. And it is not faith that will save them."

Despite this fairly severe judgment, she had a great deal of liking and admiration for both Clemenceau and Briand. Of Briand she used to say: "He is a spell-binder, and I cannot resist his spell. Whatever he asserts always seems to me patently true. I well understand his dominion over the crowd and the art with which he makes Parliament change its mind."

And she would add, not without pride: "It was in my house that he made his entry into society as a young deputy."

"The literary and artistic world, the political world, and a few members of the highest social circles passed in review in the salon in the Avenue Hoche" between five and seven o'clock, says M. Nicolas Ségur in his *Conversations avec Anatole France*. Intimates of the household were authorized to bring those of their friends who desired to make the acquaintance of France, or of some other illustrious frequenter, on condition that the newcomers themselves had something to offer. One day when Mme. de C—— introduced a young woman of rare beauty and equal stupidity, one of

those present confided to Mme. Arman de Caillavet his astonishment that anybody should dare present to her so uninteresting a person. She replied promptly, "I am not of your opinion. A salon has need of beautiful flowers. That young woman is a flower, and I am grateful to Mme. de C—— for having thus adorned my reception."

Toward six o'clock a circle would form about France, and, as M. Emile Hovelaque has written, "the interminable discourses blossomed before an audience of admirers." "The audience included the frequenters of the salon, pretty women, great ladies, old journalists, young writers, candidates for the Academy, men and women novelists and poets, famous surgeons, society psychiatrists, fashionable painters, and renowned sculptors," says M. Ségur. "Besides the faithful, there were many other celebrities . . . as well as the most distinguished foreign intellectuals who happened to be in Paris."

"The most distinguished persons and the favorite friends" were asked to the Wednesday dinners, which were always followed by a small reception. From time to time, after these dinners, France would read aloud to a small number of the elect a few pages or chapters from his forthcoming book.

Guglielmo Ferrero, the great historian, began in 1905 to frequent the salon in the Avenue Hoche

whenever he was in Paris. He delivered a lecture there about which he speaks in a charming letter:

"I had spoken on Nero before the Lecture Society on March 23. I was to deliver another lecture at the Sorbonne on April 6, on the excavations at Alesia. In the meantime, one Wednesday evening, I made a sort of address on the Romanization of Gaul. Mme. de Caillavet had invited a number of people to hear me, many of whom submitted to the sacrifice with thoroughly Parisian graciousness. . . .

"I made many acquaintances in the salon of Mme. de Caillavet, among others M. Jaurès,[10] whom I used to see, at least, in the first few years. Afterward, I believe, Mme. de Caillavet and he fell out, for I never saw him again. I recall that I was always happy to see M. Jaurès among the guests, for I was sure then that I could remain silent and listen! Mme. de Caillavet had almost a mania for insisting that I speak. Very often during dinner she would summon the guests to be silent in order to hear me, but I did not always have my arguments in shape for a discourse. When Jaurès was there, he spoke at great length and very well, and I had the pleasure of being counted among the audience.

"I went to Mme. Caillavet's on Sunday whenever I was free, for I enjoyed her salon greatly. It al-

[10] The great Socialist orator, assassinated in August, 1914.

ways contained interesting people and pretty women. I observed that Mme. de Caillavet did not possess that kind of retrospective jealousy often felt by elderly women who have been beautiful. She seemed even to feel the pleasure of a sort of rejuvenation as she watched the younger generation at its flirtations. . . .

"Mme. de Caillavet was very kind to me. She helped to make me known personally, and to draw attention to my book."

Father Moreux, the learned astronomer of the Observatory of Bourges, also came to the Avenue Hoche, where he tried to win governmental sympathy with a view to recovering his telescopes, which had been sequestrated along with the other property of the church, as a result of the separation of Church and State. He lectured there with lantern slides on the subject of Mars, before an audience skilfully made up of scientists, society folk, and members of the Government. He succeeded in winning the interest of the last group, and his instruments were eventually returned to him.

On another evening Mme. Marcelle Tinayre, the novelist, spoke on love in the literature written by women.

Loie Fuller was an intimate friend of Mme. Arman de Caillavet, who had persuaded France to

write a preface to one of her books. She brought a troupe of children to dance in the Avenue Hoche one Wednesday evening. She wanted very much to have Reynaldo Hahn compose "a little piece" for this evening. An embassy was sent to him, and he wrote to Mme. Arman:

"Our dear dancer-philosopher has already deputed two magicians, who have come charged with the duty of extracting from me the orchestration of a harmless little waltz. I should have had to do this work in one hour, the copyist would have had to accomplish the miracle of transcribing it in a single night, etc. . . . Altogether, a thing so chimerical that I refused to discuss it.

"Of course I should be delighted, in other circumstances, that is to say, in peace and with sufficient time before me, to write something for her and her children's troupe. But that is impossible just now, for I am over my head in work. . . .

"The only thing I had to offer her was the *Pavane* I had composed for the revival of *Angelo* at Sarah's. But a pavane danced in ancient tunics! . . ."

Reynaldo often sang in the Avenue Hoche. Mme. Arman would say: "I am forced to conceal very carefully the days on which he is to come to dinner, for otherwise everybody wants to be asked

in the hope of hearing him." Whenever he sang, the parties lasted until a late hour, and Mme. Arman de Caillavet would declare in her enchantment, "He is the only person who can make me understand and love music."

To quote again M. Nicolas Ségur: "What sparkling conversations and little society intrigues took place in that salon where shone the purest extract of Parisian wit, indeed of wit itself! Nothing, I believe, has replaced this delightful hearth of the intelligence. The mistress of the house, affable, cordial, omnipresent, received each guest in person and introduced us all into a luminous circle where France's words shed their light. He would speak there ceaselessly, because it was a great pleasure to him to pour out his ideas just as they occurred to him, and would pay not the slightest attention to his interlocutors. Then his friend and hostess would insist that he relate a particular story, calling to him from the other end of the salon, gently imperious and dominating, creating silence about him, extinguishing all other conversation in order that his might be heard to greater advantage. And France would speak of politics and art, of literature and history, crowning his words with paradox and caprice. . . . I remember a dinner scintillating with wit, at which M. Clemenceau vied with M. France."

How many other dinners, how many other joustings between the keenest minds, the most brilliant and cultivated spirits: the Comtesse de Noailles, Princess Alexandre de Caraman-Chimay, M. and Mme. Henri de Régnier, Mme. Madeleine Lemaire, Mlle. Hélène Vacaresco, Mme. René Raoul Duval, Raymond Poincaré, Louis Barthou, Henri Lavedan, Briand, Painlevé, Victorien Sardou, Pierre Loti, Alfred Capus, Pierre de Nolhac, Marcel Prévost, Georges de Porto-Riche, Comte Primoli, Robert de Flers, Father Mugnier, Adrien Hébrard, Professor Pozzi, Professor Dumas, Professor Robin, Abel Hermant, Tristan Bernard, Fernand Venderem, Pierre Mille, Mme. Réjane, Lucien Guitry, etc., etc. It is impossible to mention them all, and if Marcel Proust's name is absent from the list, it is because the state of his health had already obliged him to remain apart from those he loved best. In long and generous letters, he clung to his memory of the Avenue Hoche. Some of them he wrote to Mme. Arman de Caillavet; others to her children.

"I do not know how to thank you for your delightful letter. And Reynaldo, who came this evening at midnight (and whom I could not see because I was having a very bad attack) left me a note to say that you had asked to see me. Alas, that is impossible. There are certain days, which

come about once each month, when I am well. Then I get up and go out, but generally too late to call on you. On other days I have attacks and fumigations. I allow no one in. Not even my doctor. The only being I see occasionally is Reynaldo, because he comes constantly and at impossible hours, and one time in six I happen to have done with a fumigation, and let him in because he is so accustomed to my illness, receives my replies to his questions on bits of paper when I cannot speak, etc. The other day I went out at one o'clock in the morning and called on Mme. Lemaire, who is one of those I see most frequently, and whom I have not seen in a year. It is seven years since I have been able to see Mme. Greffulhe. And the same for many others. I am speaking at length of myself, but I assure you that it is you I am thinking of. It seems to me that almost at any moment I may be well and on my way to see you. . . .

"I have been at Versailles for the past four months. But is this really Versailles? I have not been out of my bed; I have not seen the château *once*, nor the Trianon, nor anything else. I open my eyes when night falls, and I wonder often if the hermetically closed and electrically lighted room I inhabit is not situated somewhere else than in Versailles, where I have not seen a single dead leaf whirl

over a single fountain. Such is my beautiful youth and my beautiful life. But your letter has brought a great deal of sadness into my thoughts, which are extremely resigned, since they are the thoughts of one who has lost everything and has nothing left to lose. Have you been ill? And are you discouraged? And sad? This cannot go on; I must see you when I am in Paris. . . .

"I hope to be in Paris soon. I rented an apartment there in October and am still unable to occupy it because of circumstances that are incredible, the more so since I am part owner of the building. I do not know when I shall be able to get into it, nor whether you would be willing to come and see me. It is a very ugly apartment, in the midst of dust and trees, everything I hate, and I took it because it was the only one I could find that mamma knew; also because, having had to tear myself away from the Rue de Courcelles, which was too dear, I have not had the courage to move into an apartment where I should have felt that her eyes fell on things she had never seen, that she had never known, or been able to form an opinion about. This one is itself much too dear, and I do not think I shall be able to stay there (if, as a matter of fact, I am able to move into it), but it will have been a transition between what is for me the true and dear cemetery—the apartment in the Rue

de Courcelles—and the unknown, the things entirely foreign to us.

"Tell Gaston and Robert that I have had a *fairly splendid* (!) idea for a play, and that I have not the energy to write it. Likewise (this has no relation to my idea for a play), have they read (*in extenso*, in the supplement to the *Débats*) a paper read by M. Berger before the Institute on Aliénor, that wife of Louis XII. whose conduct was so bad that he took her with him on the Crusade in order that she might not cut up in his absence, and who nevertheless became the mistress of the Sultan, etc., etc.? The rest of the story would make a very amusing and picturesque outline and a pendant they ought to provide to their marvellous *Vergy*, which is one of the most delightful things I have ever seen, and which I applauded so violently that three times without wishing it I just escaped smacking my neighbour, M. Hervieu.

"Marcel Proust."

"Madame:

"I have been waiting before writing you to learn whether I was to go to Cabourg or not. And now I think I shall not go. And I do not want to let any more time pass before thanking you. I am grieved to think that I may have bored or wearied you by asking you to write to me. Don't give it

another thought. It would have been charming to hear you speak of it, but it is not worth written dissertations. I go out occasionally when chance permits, and it is generally to see the hawthorns, or the furbelows of the three apple-trees in their ball-gowns under a grey sky. But when, much more rarely, I go out not among things but people, the ladies' frocks, whose colours are less delicious than those of the apple-trees, embarrass me quite as much. For when I have an impression, I need precise words to explain it, and I have not those words. So I look through books on botany, or architecture, and fashion-papers. And naturally, what I want is never there. Young Prémonville, whom I mentioned to you the other day, asked his botany teacher about these things. I thanked him effusively for his information—which was of no help whatever. I have seen again the two ladies of the evening before the one on which I wanted to call on you. But I was no better able to describe them. By the way, you may not have heard what Mme. S—— said to the other one. The other one, plagiarizing Mme. Récamier's (?) remark, said that she would know she was no longer beautiful when the little chimney-sweeps no longer turned to look as she passed. Mme. S—— replied: 'Oh, have no fear, my dear. So long as you dress the way you do, people will always turn to look after you!'

"You probably know also of the letter Montesquiou wrote to Maurice de R——, of whom he had asked the loan of jewellery for a costume ball and who sent him only one tiny brooch, cautioning him not to lose it because it was a family jewel: 'I was not aware that you had a family, but I did think you had jewellery." I am compensating myself for months of solitude and sadness by a quarter of an hour of frivolity with you, but I am afraid you will think my frivolity excessive. My memory and my imagination present me from time to time with stereoscopic sessions with the smile of your daughter and with records of her voice. I call this by an old-fashioned title: 'The Pleasures of Solitude.' My affectionate greetings to Gaston, and my fond respects to you.

"Marcel Proust." [11]

M. Emile Hovelaque, who observed France very closely at this period, depicts him thus:

"I followed with curiosity the gradual blossoming of his genius. . . . Until the time when his conversation became really dazzling, he never ceased to grow greater. Even a physical transformation took place, and in his old age his face took on a sort of beauty. . . ."

[11] Letter to Mme. Gaston de Caillavet.

M. André Maurel remarks that Mme. Arman de Caillavet "was matchless in the art of gathering about him those who could interest him and give him his cues."

Mme. Arman de Caillavet's worship of Anatole France reminds one strongly of Mme. Récamier's worship of Chateaubriand. What Sainte-Beuve wrote of the great Viscount and his friend might well be applied to France and Mme. Arman. France, "during the last twenty years of his life, was the great centre of her world, the great interest of her life, the one to which she subordinated all others, if she did not sacrifice them. Each day she invented a thousand gracious ways of renewing and freshening praise. She drew to him new friends and admirers from everywhere."

This progressive ascension of the salon of Mme. Arman de Caillavet toward France's apotheosis went on for some twenty years. It was as if admiration, enthusiasm, and fervour were limitless. Yet, despite this atmosphere, despite this incense burned at times with a little servility, Mme. de Caillavet could apply to herself the phrase of Bernard Palissy, the great potter, who after years of effort staked all he had, threw all his household goods into his furnace, in order to obtain an ex-

treme temperature, and drew forth something more perfect than his wildest dream; then repeated: "Why are you sad, O my soul, since you have found that for which you sought?"

Mme. Arman de Caillavet was sad.

She was aware that the yoke of her affectionate hands which held France to the furrow of work weighed heavily upon him. He grew irritable; he became trying. The slightest contradiction exasperated him. The frequenters of the salon, witnesses of the brilliant receptions and the cordial manner of the two old friends, still believed in the reign of a harmonious intimacy. That intimacy no longer existed. It was clouded at every instant by France's disputes, exactions, and caprice, which Mme. Arman often answered with a flow of tears. One day when she had criticized certain passages in the *Vie de Jeanne d'Arc,* France took the bundle of manuscript pages from which he had been reading to her and threw them into the flames of the fireplace. Mme. Arman was heartbroken at the sight of this idiotic destruction. France gloated wickedly over the effect of his violence. When his appetite was sated, he said to her suddenly: "You know, of course, that I still have the rough draft, a copy, and several proofs." Mme. Arman did know it, but such scenes were very painful to her.

This period in the existence of Mme. Arman de

Caillavet and Anatole France may be compared with an equally tragic period in the life of Mme. Récamier and her great friend Chateaubriand. "The character of the eminent writer had not been able to resist a sort of intoxication which success, rumour, and society readily induce in ardent and mobile imaginations. His zeal for her was not lessened, but Mme. Récamier no longer felt in it that shade of respectful reserve which is the mark of a lasting sentiment." [12] Like Mme. Récamier in those days of trial, Mme. Arman no longer recognized the France of the earlier years, him "whom she was leading toward fame." As Sainte-Beuve wrote in his article on Mme. du Châtelet: "When fame intrudes upon a tête-à-tête it ruins everything. . . . Never love Voltaire, or Jean-Jacques, or Goethe, or Chateaubriand, if by chance you should meet such great men on your way."

When Mme. Arman de Caillavet met France, he was awkward, timid, ill-bred, lazy, and poor. She forged his fame, and instead of casting a glow over their old age and their affection, as would have been just, it brought irritation, quarrels, and cruel grief to the poor woman.

They recognized by common consent that a separation of several months had become necessary.

[12] Mme. Lenormant, *Souvenirs sur Mme. Récamier.*

France accepted an offer to lecture in the Argentine which had been repeatedly made for some months; but no sooner had he accepted than his old friend was filled with regret. Too proud to let it be seen, she did everything possible, on the contrary, to facilitate his departure and his journey. She gave him a man-servant, François, from her own establishment, to watch over him, and perhaps even to watch him. She was very uneasy. "He is a great child," she would say, "and when children are allowed to run loose they are capable of all sorts of foolishness."

A farewell dinner was held on the Wednesday preceding his departure. Many friends came in that evening to bid France good-bye and wish him success. Mme. Arman was mortally sad. She repeated throughout the evening, trying to smile: "The madman! he is going out to the antipodes, to hang head down, in the company of savages, monkeys, and parrots." She laughed, but her laughter was cut by a sob. All during the three months of his absence she repeated, laughing and crying at once: "The madman is out there, with his feet in the air," etc. She was probably repeating unconsciously the words Commander Rivière had written to her thirty years before.

Montesquiou, who had not been asked to the farewell dinner, sent Mme. Arman de Caillavet a

toast which he begged her to read. He wrote: "It would please me, it would touch me, not to be forgotten at your farewell dinner. Even more not to appear forgetful. Will you then do me the kindness to communicate the lines enclosed herewith to the illustrious master, with my wishes . . ." etc. His toast ended as follows: "May the sirens bring him harmoniously back to the shore which is proud of bearing and of having given him his name."

France left. Then Mme. Arman learned the sorrow of separation, the long days, the interminable weeks without news, solitude in the midst of a crowd of indifferent people.

One day, surrounded by a few intimate friends, she cried out almost gaily: "Listen. I received a letter from the Argentine this morning which I shall read to you. 'We delivered our first lecture yesterday. Howling success! . . .' " A too zealous friend broke out ecstatically: "What a charming letter! Ah, that France!" Mme. Arman was indignant: "But, sir, the letter is not from France; it is from François, his man." There was a great deal of laughter.

From the time France left, gaiety became rare in the Avenue Hoche. Over the Sunday and Wednesday gatherings there hung the cloud of Mme. Arman de Caillavet's sadness; her absent mind no longer guided and animated the conversations. She

was observed to be silent, absorbed, far away. . . . Like Mme. Récamier while Chateaubriand was in Italy, she was "wrapped in her memories, almost deprived of sleep, and living only on the thought of the friend" [13] who had gone. When her mind turned from the traveller, it found no consolation. Her husband had never ceased to cause her the gravest worries, which she had endured with incredible patience and weakness, and she perceived too late that this weakness had led her to the brink of ruin. Her health became visibly worse. Her son, believing that France's work and fame held an undeservedly great place in the life of his mother, had wandered a little away from her. Years before, on leaving school, he had said: "Mamma has the soul of a school master; she is never satisfied until she is making somebody work. It used to be me; now it is M. France." He no longer said anything, but he had only silent blame for her excessive devotion and for the attitude of him who was its object. His affectionate intimacy with his mother was gone. She suffered thereby, but made no effort to revive it. She even lost her taste for people. In these days of discouragement, she wrote:

"My callers yesterday spoke only of themselves, and they were neither sincere nor ridiculous enough to be interesting."

[13] Edouard Herriot, *Madame Récamier et ses amis.*

"I am distressed to miss you when you come through Paris, but I assure you that I have no regret at leaving all these people whose insipidity seems to me more and more patent."

She had no illusions about some of her callers. One Sunday, seeing Mme. S—— in the act of laying it on thick in order to persuade a cabinet minister to dine at her house, Mme. Arman exclaimed: "Look at her, lurking in a corner by the door like a poacher behind a tree; *she's laying a snare!* . . . She pretends to be very fond of me, and she isn't at all. She comes to my salon only because of the acquaintances she makes here." The poor woman saw and foresaw the truth. Mme. S—— was not kind to her memory after her death.

All of Mme. Arman's letters of this period reflect only bitterness and disgust:

"For two years I often met X—— when I went to see Prouté, my print dealer. He would tell me that he was going to the Rue des Beaux-Arts where he was writing a novel at the home of an obscure friend, the only person who would bring him his pipe and slippers. It is in the Rue des Beaux-Arts that Oscar Wilde died under a false name. Mystery and squalor. You see that I am reduced to gathering my gossip in low quarters. . . .

"Do not worry about your lack of serenity. That will come to you with time and white hair, as it came to me."

Despite her white hair and her letter, this serenity was but a mask. Her confidant, Father Mugnier, who sustained and consoled her in these days of trial, was the only one to know what lay at the bottom of this soul in distress. To him alone she showed what she was—a woman in despair. She saw him almost daily, and her religious indifference gave way to a desire for a faith in which she hoped to find some comfort, the strength that was leaving her, and that serenity which continued to escape her.

One day Mme. Arman de Caillavet appeared before her friends so pale, so upset, that they were certain something tragic had occurred. She had received an anonymous letter from the Argentine announcing the marriage of France to an amiable actress who was touring out there. He had met her on the ship, and had crossed in her company. Soon afterward, Mme. Arman received a clipping from a Buenos Aires newspaper announcing the presence of M. and *Mme.* France at an official gathering. Other letters and clippings came, all of them calculated to wound her. The news of the marriage spread quickly through Paris, and those who did

not like Mme. Arman de Caillavet added such comments as could only be painful to her.

Her friendship and her self-esteem were affronted, and she suffered greatly. And the ferocious malice of Paris aggravated an incident which should never have grown beyond the proportions of rumour and false news. For France did not marry the actress; in fact, he treated her wretchedly. Soon after his return, the woman appeared at the Villa Saïd in a railway omnibus loaded with her trunks, at an hour appointed by France, confident that he would keep his word and go away with her. Joséphine, France's servant, informed her that France was "on shipboard."

In reality, he had left for Capian with Mme. Arman de Caillavet, very angry at all the discussion excited by this incident. He was vexed with his old friend because of the violence of her distress, which he judged absurd and out of all proportion to the facts. He felt, not without reason, that her violence had lent to the adventure an importance it did not of itself possess, and rendered them both ridiculous. He asserted that if Mme. Arman had greeted the news of this marriage with a smile, "the joke" would not have continued; that it was she who created the affair by her worried and sorrowing attitude. He pretended not to be

able to understand why she was sad, ill, and ravaged.

She was in great need of rest and peace. Hoping to find them at Capian, she was impatient to get there. But France loved to dawdle, and persuaded her to stop several times on the way down. From Tours she wrote to a friend:

"We have just finished luncheon. I ate almost nothing, and great care was taken of what I drank, for we are seeking the mysterious cause of my stomach pains. Our relations are very polite. It appears that Joséphine is protecting me. I said that I had another unexpected friend in Brousson. M. France maintained that he knew nothing about it, and then, seeing that that would not do, he lowered his head. Well, things are going as well as can be expected, but everything is ruined, irreparably ruined."

From Poitiers: "Nothing new. I try to remain quiet, but the heartsickness is always there. . . . He feigns a great interest in how I am getting on."

From Niort: "My stomach is far from cured, and M. France pretends not to know the cause of my condition. Oh, our relations are as good as the circumstances allow, but I still lack the courage to

live the life that is before me. . . . I am too discouraged and disgusted. We buy a great deal of bric-à-brac, which puts him in excellent humour. . . . Just the same, it is all too lamentable. . . . I try not to be too sad about it. . . ."

Finally they reached Capian. But they were not to be there long. France had a desire to visit Montaigne's château and to make a little trip through the south. Besides, hadn't they promised to visit Loti at Hendaye?

Orders had been given in the Avenue Hoche and at the Villa Saïd to say that "M. France was travelling," and if more questions were asked, to reply with vague precision: "He is on a ship." France did not wish any one to know where he was. His sojourn in the Argentine and his return had given rise to too many comments. He wanted to be forgotten for a time. Mme. Arman desired this even more than he. She answered a letter from her son as follows:

"I found your brief note on my return from a four-day motor trip through the Médoc country and to the Château Montaigne. I shall not leave on the longer trip before Monday or Tuesday. I shall keep you informed of my movements so that we may be able to arrange something. I suppose

that for the present you will be with the Flers. Do not pay any attention to the Bordeaux Fair; important merchants no longer exhibit there.

"Thank you for your interest in my literary lucubrations. I shall give you the last chapter in time for you to send it to Baschet on your return to Paris.

"You haven't told me anything about *Décorée* [14] or about what you propose to write for the Gymnase Theatre. *Le Roi* and *L'Ane de Buridan* are finishing their runs in an apotheosis. I am myself walking a little in your reflected glory; the dressmakers and milliners reduce their prices for me because of your fame. I know that one always neglects to enjoy what one has. Still, I try to warm my old age a little in the heat of your young rays; otherwise, it would be rather morose."

She did not wish her son to come to Capian that year, for he refused to meet France. She trembled lest he arrive unexpectedly, in which case France would have to leave, and she feared that, alone in Paris, the great child would once more fall under the influence of the charms which had just failed to separate them for ever. This gave rise to poor little lies, anguish, sadness, and the care she took to reassure Gaston about her health and make him be-

[14] Later called *Le Bois Sacré*.

lieve that she was at every moment on the point of leaving the Gironde.

As she was very tired, and had frequent spells of dizziness and suffocation, her physician and friend, Dr. Aunis, begged her to give up the proposed motor trip. She left, nevertheless, and wrote from Toulouse:

"I am well except that I have caught cold and have a sore throat. We are going to Carcassonne and to Narbonne, and even farther if we have to. M. France is in a charming humour, but he no longer works morning and evening as he used to do, and for this reason I do not want to prolong our trip too far."

From Montpellier: "I caught cold, and being unable to look after myself, since we are moving about, and because it has rained, I am rather ill. This trip, which has been agreeable and on which my companion has been constantly charming, has tired me somewhat, and I do not think you will find me looking well. Oh, when shall I be able to go back to Capian!"

They visited Loti at Hendaye, where Mme. Arman was very ill. When she left, the "magician" gave her a photograph of his house, on the bank of the Bidassoa, upon which he wrote: "Today, Octo-

ber 24, 1909, I have had the joy of receiving Mme. Arman de Caillavet in my smuggler's tower. Pierre Loti."

When she reached Capian she was completely exhausted and very ill. Her son wrote to her:

"Dear Mamma:

"It is very long since I have had news of you; I hope this means that you are well. Yet who was it told me last night that you had been ill at Loti's? . . . Nothing very new here. We have all gone back to our ball and chain. What are your plans? I should be happy to see you again soon."

She delayed writing to him until she thought herself cured and ready to return to Paris. At the same time, her letter bore the mark of sombre discouragement, for her son wrote on the day it came:

"I have a letter from mamma, very sad, very 'aged.' She has been extremely ill, and wrote to me only when she was convalescing. They had to send to Bordeaux for a doctor. She has serious signs of pleurisy."

The temporary recovery was followed by a violent attack. France never left his old friend's side and essayed to distract her from her suffering

by reading to her for hours. He was thinking perhaps of what Chateaubriand wrote to Joubert soon after the death of Mme. de Beaumont: "We never feel how precious are our friends until the moment when we are threatened with their loss. We are even insane enough, when everything is going well, to think that we may leave them with impunity." France, who was not the churlish, wicked ingrate during this last month that he has been called, became afraid, and insisted that Mme. Arman de Caillavet send for their friend Professor Widal to come from Paris.

The following letters form an exact and distressing picture of the end of the last sojourn at Capian:

"Dear Mamma:

"Your letter which came this morning was reassuring, but in the past forty-eight hours, since Maurice has telephoned, we have begun to be really uneasy. Write to me frankly. We telephoned yesterday to the Avenue Hoche and were told you were alone at Capian. If you feel ill, do not hesitate to let me know, and I will come down for you; you cannot travel alone if you are not well. I hope that the storms have gone from the Gironde as they have from Paris, and no longer shake the old house.

"Gaston."

"Dear Mamma:

"What news?

"The last letter we had from you reassured us. But some one told me yesterday that you had sent for Widal to come down. This makes me very uneasy and fills me with worry. I beg you not to hide anything from me. Answer me frankly. Everybody around me seems to know more about your health than I do. And I confess that I am very hurt by this. . . .

"I should like to believe that I have been worried needlessly, but I beg you to keep me informed. . . .

"Gaston."

November 27, 1909.

"Dear Madame:

"I was delighted to receive your letter, but it did not bring me news enough. I suppose that you are better, but I cannot warn you too seriously to be extremely careful. All your friends are wishing you well and will be happy to see you again.

"I need scarcely assure you of my deep affection.

"Fernand Widal.

"You may be sure of my complicity. I shall say to your son, if he mentions it, that I was on my way to Arcachon when I stopped over to see you."

"My little Jeanne:

"You have written me a very pretty letter, so very thoughtful and so gently affectionate that I shall keep it in the family archives, where it will be found later to prove how well we got on, and thus be a lesson perhaps to future little sons-in-law and far-away little daughters still slumbering in the bosom of God."

Capian, December 17, 1909.

". . . My doctor, like Penelope, weaves and unweaves the tapestry of my departure. Finally, despite his cunning, the day is approaching. The dampness is fatal, and the cold pernicious. All my combined ills will perhaps form a mixture in which each will kill off the others."

Capian, December, 1909.

"My little Jeanne:

"This house is certainly a vile place for convalescence, and hereafter I shall not stay on so late in the autumn. I still hope to leave, but from day to day my doctor begs a few more days' delay. It is exasperating, for the house is full of sly traps and drafts. Well, I hope that my next letter will tell you that this departure is about to take place. We shall all go to see *Décorée,* finally. From what Gaston says, it will be a delightful play, with

charming details that need fear no comparison with *Le Roi.*

"We shall still have some splendid evenings!"

CAPIAN, January 2, 1910.[15]

"I shall be home finally this week. The day depends on when we can get a particularly comfortable car.

"My illness was not serious, but you must look forward to seeing me looking rather tired, although I hope to be myself very soon."

She returned to Paris so changed that it was evident she would never recover. Two days before her death, when she was alone for a moment with her daughter-in-law, she handed her a sealed package. She was very low. Suffocating, speaking with difficulty, she said: "Do not open it now. . . . Wait. . . . Wait several years. . . . No one must know but you. . . . Do not mention this to any one. . . . *Any one.* Publish this when you think the time has come. . . . Explanatory notes will be necessary. If you should die before publishing it, Simone must undertake the publication; *I insist upon it.* . . . Explain to her; she will understand. This is my last, my formal, wish. Do it in memory of me. . . . I have never ceased to love Gaston tenderly. . . . He has not always realized it. . . . Yes, yes; I know. I was often blind,

[15] Ten days before her death.

clumsy . . . but he was sometimes unjust. He did not understand. One never understands . . . or understands too late. . . . Today, I understand. I understand everything, everything. . . . Oh, what misery! If I have hurt him, I ask his forgiveness. . . . You will tell him so, won't you? But not today. . . . Later; soon; when I am dead. There must be no explanations between him and me. . . ."

And as her daughter-in-law assured her that she was not in danger, she went on: "No, no; I shall not recover. . . . Besides, I no longer wish to. . . . It is better that I go. . . . I haven't the courage to live the life that is before me. . . ." [16]

Mme. Gaston de Caillavet begged her to collect her strength, to fight against her illness, to think of her son, of her granddaughter. "Simone! . . . Yes . . . I might have taken her in hand too, made her work . . . as I did the others. . . . But I am too old. . . ." And she repeated in despair: "Too old, too old; it is better to die. . . . My death will simplify everything!" Then, full of gentleness, forgetting her pain, she added: "Don't you feel too sad about it . . . and don't weep; it hurts me." She was gasping for breath, but between two attacks of suffocation she went on, with her eyes on the package: "Hide it . . . put it away."

[16] "She thought herself a burden to me and wanted to go in order to rid me of herself," writes Chateaubriand in his *Mémoires*, of Mme. de Beaumont.

Mme. Gaston de Caillavet thought the package contained her memoirs. She believed this until the day, a few years ago, when Anatole France, thinking it might contain among other papers an unfinished novel, advised her to open it. It contained numerous letters from him. Only those which bear witness to their matchless friendship have been published in this volume. All of them might readily have found a place here, however.

Mme. Arman de Caillavet died quite suddenly on January 12, 1910.

For several days she had seemed to be making progress; her suffocation had diminished. But in a few moments her condition became terrible; she suffocated. Unable to pronounce a word, the poor woman seized a pencil, always within reach, and wrote on a bit of paper beside her: "Gaston quick, and M. Fr—"

Death did not allow her to finish the name that was so deeply engraved upon her heart.

Her son arrived in time. She died in his arms.

A few hours after her death France wrote to Dr. Aunis, who had attended her during her illness at Capian:

"Dear M. Aunis:

"I am deeply grieved to announce to you the death of Mme. de Caillavet, who quietly breathed

her last this morning at half past ten o'clock. During her short stay in Paris she mentioned you often with esteem and gratitude. Dr. Widal was not present during the final attack. Two days before, he had sought unavailingly the lesion which was the cause of her persistent high temperature. After this operation our sick friend had the eyes of a tortured woman.

"You have known this admirable woman enough to realize how great is my loss. My life is ended.

"I am grateful to you for the care with which you tended my great friend.

"ANATOLE FRANCE.

"Alas, you were right!"

In another letter he wrote: "Her death is my death." He went on living, though, and if his pain was not of long duration, it was nevertheless sincere and deep. One year later, meeting M. Emile Hovelaque, whom he had not seen in the interval, he repeated with sobs what he had written to Dr. Aunis: "You who have really known her, my friend, you know what I have lost."

France did not like to nurture painful memories, and brushed aside everything that might trouble the serenity of his skepticism. This explains why he often gave the impression of being without gratitude for the twenty most beautiful and fruitful

years of his life. Yet, each time that chance obliged him to encounter a memory of this past, he was overcome by emotion.

When, in 1919, Princess Bibesco brought to La Béchellerie (France's country place) the manuscript of one of the tales from the *Puits de Sainte-Claire* which he had given to Mme. Arman and which bore her ex-libris, a flowered basket, with her monogram, L. A. C., on the side (given to the princess by Mme. Arman in a burst of affection), the master's eyes filled with tears, and he led the young woman into his room to show her, "on a beautiful chest of drawers, that altar of middle-class alcoves where the place of honour is reserved for family portraits," [17] a photograph of his old friend, between the daguerreotypes of his father and his mother.

The death of Mme. Arman de Caillavet was a grievous surprise to her friends. Marcel Proust was perhaps the most touched among them all. On the day of her death, he wrote to Gaston:

"My dearest Gaston:

"In a flood of tears all the past, all the beginning of our great friendship, when you were a soldier, then when I was one, has risen up in my heart, and I assure you that it is a very fraternal, very affec-

[17] Princess Bibesco, *Une Visite à la Béchellerie.*

tionate heart that shares your grief today. I do not believe anybody loved and admired and knew your mother better than I did, and I assure you that nobody will remember her more constantly and faithfully.

"It is a great sorrow to me not to be with you. I am abed with fever, and have been for some time; I shall try to come tomorrow morning. Could you put this wreath by her for me? I know how ill she was, what was her end, how wonderful your admirable wife was to her while she was ill. Her gentle tenderness will give you in your anguish something I have always lacked, for I have always wept alone. I am yours with all my heart,

"MARCEL PROUST."

Marcel was very ill. Mme. Gaston de Caillavet sent him a note forbidding him to come to the funeral, but he was obdurate:

"MADAME:

"Thank you infinitely for your letter; and I am so touched by Gaston's. Since, even at a time like this, you are still so kind to me, may I ask something more of you? A little while ago I sent to the Avenue Hoche (by the same person who brought the four letters, and delivered it with them) a wreath. But I know that on such days

servants put flowers into corners, and I—who remember how she would look at the flowers I sent to her, would inhale their perfume, ring to have them properly placed—I should feel a sort of pleasure, if I may say so, to know that these—the last, but the first about which I care!—were put beside her. If you have one second to give to my wreath, you will recognize it: there are camellias, arums (I think they are arums, white cowls), lilacs, roses, and violets. Is what I ask of you possible? Thank Gaston infinitely for having had the courage to write to me. Do not tell him that I am drugging myself despite his advice in order to try to come tomorrow, and do embrace him; you can do everything for him in this moment.

"Your respectful friend,

"MARCEL PROUST."

Several days later, Marcel asked Gaston to give him a photograph of his mother, another of his daughter, and that photograph which, long before, had brought a "cloud" between the two friends. Mme. Gaston de Caillavet having sent him all the photographs he might desire, he thanked her in these affectionate terms:

"MADAME:

"What emotion! What sweet joy mingled with so much sadness! How many years of my life are gathered in this dear envelope! It would really

want a heart incapable of memory, not to tremble a little in opening it. And all this seems like yesterday. I do not mean you, for this word has no meaning for you; your yesterday and today are the same. Is the photograph of you the one that was taken on the tennis courts long ago between little Daireaux and one of the Dancognées—or was it taken last summer? How is one to know, since you are exactly the same person? And, so that it may not strike at my heart as it might have done if it were 'then nothing has changed—but me,' now I may tell you with what affection I think of you all. How I love you all! As for your poor mother-in-law, my grief grows greater every day, and the sad things I heard yesterday, which I had never suspected, have mingled with it a great anguish.

"Your respectful and grateful friend,

"MARCEL PROUST."

Having learned that Mme. Gaston de Caillavet had intervened between her husband and France to soften their relations and tranquillize the last days of her mother-in-law so that the poor woman might breathe her last in peace, Marcel wrote her again:

"MADAME:

"I want to send you no more than a line to tell you that I know how sweet you were to your poor

mother-in-law. How consoling it will be for Gaston to remember this! How grateful are all his friends, and how great is their confidence in you to soften these hours during which I am so unhappy not to be able to come to him. I can scarcely write. But if I could, I should not be able to tell you how much I love you.

"Your respectful friend,
"MARCEL PROUST."

Some time later, when Marcel was writing his "long novel," he expressed his regret in several letters that he would not be able to submit it to Mme. Arman de Caillavet. She had been a dependable guide and an intelligent counsellor to all her friends. He was well aware of it.

"I am working a little, writing a long novel *which I should have been so anxious to show to your mother-in-law.* I think again of her marvellous intelligence, of the admiration with which she spoke of you at the time of your marriage. You told me (and I believe you, since you say so) that she was less kind later on. That is possible. It must have been during the time when I was ill and when a disagreement which I cannot bring to mind today without tears separated us. But personally I never

knew about it. And it is infinitely sweet to me to think that if there was a misunderstanding between you it vanished completely toward the end, and that she finally knew you for what you are, and you too understood and admired her. And I bless God for the reconciliation thanks to which Gaston, in his memory of his mother, can join you with her and add thus, to the many reasons he has for adoring you, his gratitude for your care of her and your noble attitude. Writing tires me terribly. Still, I wanted to tell you, however awkwardly, what was in my heart. But I should need to write long letters to display to you only a little of the tenderness I feel for Gaston and for you.

"Your respectful friend,

"MARCEL PROUST."

A letter from Father Mugnier to Mme. Gaston de Caillavet:

"MADAME:

". . . I shall call upon you immediately you return, and we will speak of her who is no more.

"It is one of the sorrows of my long absence that I was not able to be present during her last moments. From the religious point of view, she said things to me which were so consoling!

"A. MUGNIER."

CAPIAN, February, 1910.

"Your telegram did me so much good. Thank you for your sweet and tender thought. The day was a very sad one. Everything in this poor room is reminiscent of illness and worry. Despite the care she had, how ill she must have been in this room that is still filled with the humidity of winter. She could not recover here, and she would not return ill. Her pride aggravated her illness until she died of it."

"I owe her the deepest gratitude, for she watched over me in a way that few mothers watch over their sons; with untiring patience, and often at the expense of whole nights of work with me, she forced the lazy child I was to cultivate himself and become a man.

"GASTON."

Thanks are due to the Comtesse de Martel, Mme. Noémi Renan, Mme. Anatole France, Mme. Coulangheon, Mlle. du Bouzet, Mme. Myriam Harry, Mlle. Cazeaux Chadelle, M. Raymond Poincaré, M. Guglielmo Ferrero, M. Gabriel Hanoteaux, Canon Mugnier, M. Henri Lavedan, M. Marcel Prévost, Marquis de Flers, Professor Dumas, M. Paul Dubois, M. Charles Maurras, Doctor Proust, M. Samuel Viaud-Loti, M. Paul Souday, M. André Chaumeix, M. Roland Marcel, Dr. Aunis, and M. Robert Hervieu, for the permission, the documents, and the encouragement by which they have been kind enough to aid in the publication of this book.

The letters published in this volume have never appeared in print before, with the exception of the extracts quoted on pages 37, 148, 283, 295, and 314.

J. M. P.

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20. Discours à la Bourse du Travail.
21. Crainquebille et le Miracle du grand saint Nicolas.
22. Toast au banquet Pressensé.
23. Lettre de Mme. de la Sablière (copie d'A. France).

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